

NFL Playoffs
SPECIAL ISSUE

Baseball '85: Rose, Gooden, Seaver, Niekro & Carew

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INSIDE

SPORTS

The Unreal Jim McMahon: Chicago's Rambo

'Outta My Way, Wimps!'

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PLAYOFF
FEATURES ON**

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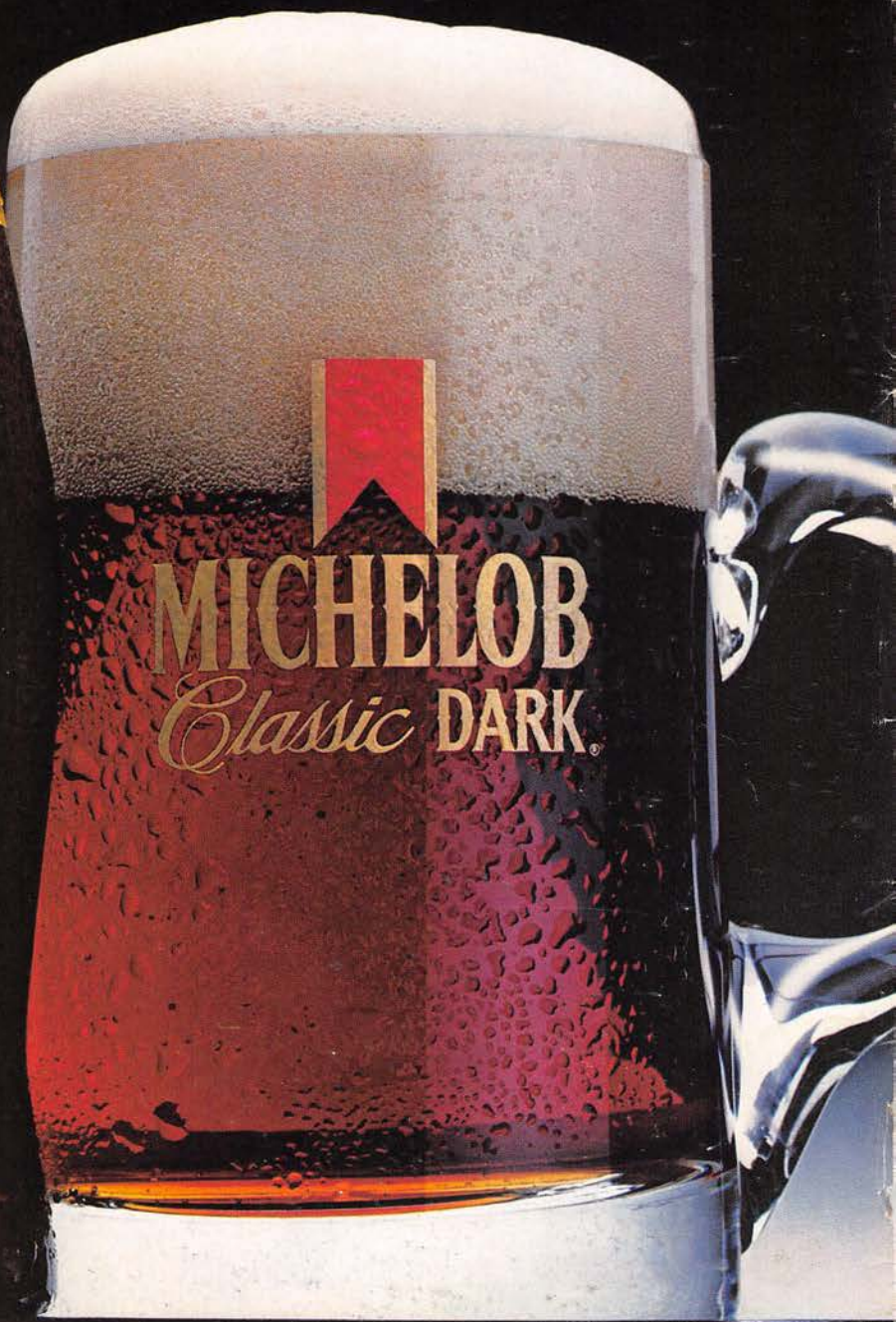


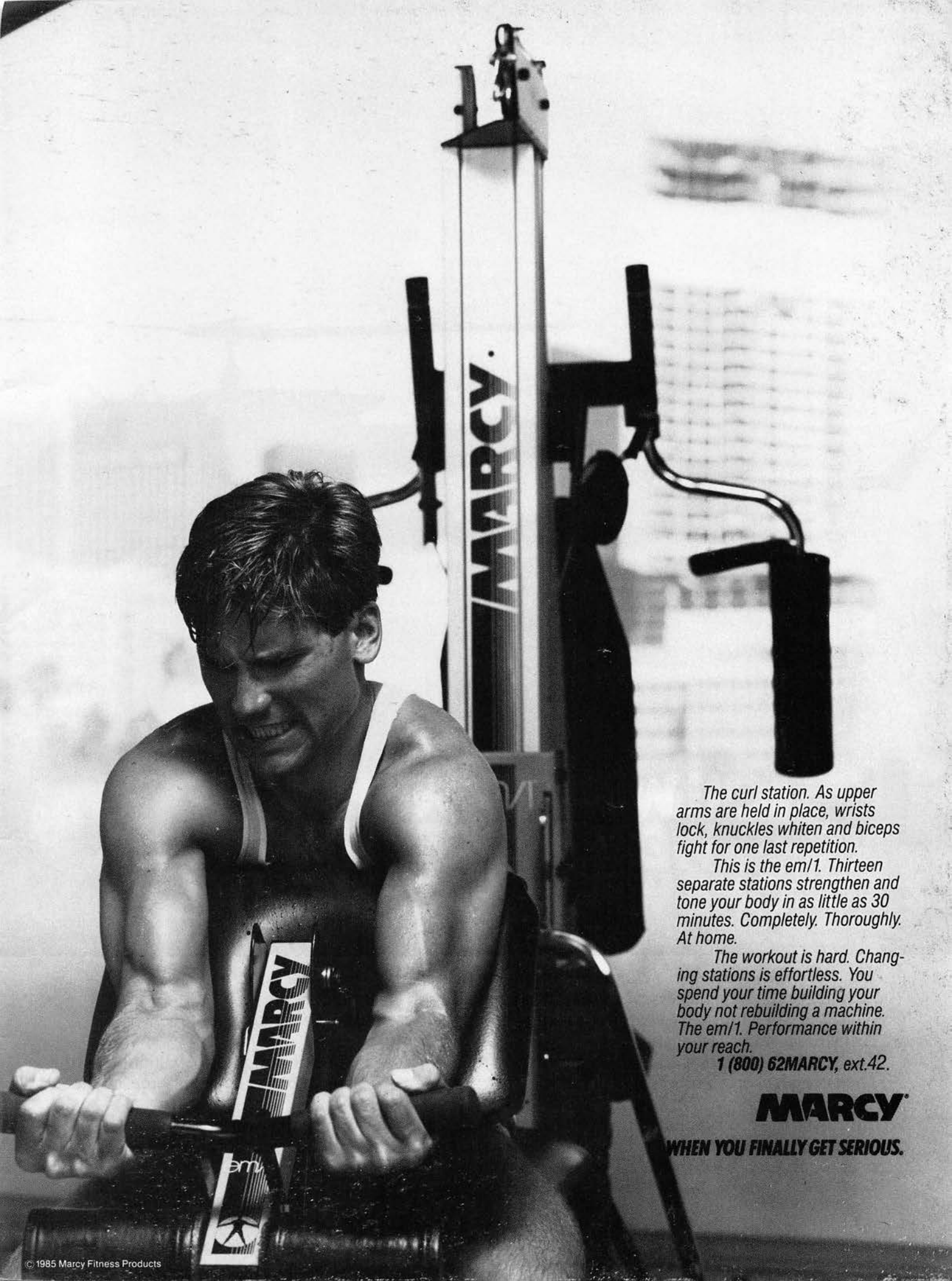
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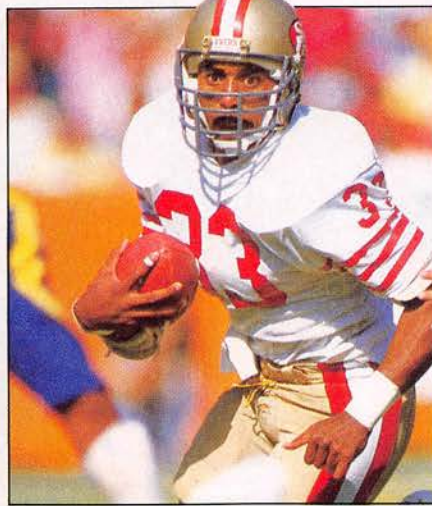
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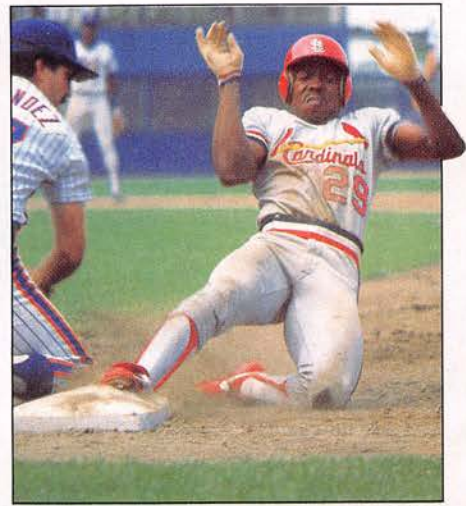
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Cover: Jim McMahon photo by Bill Smith.
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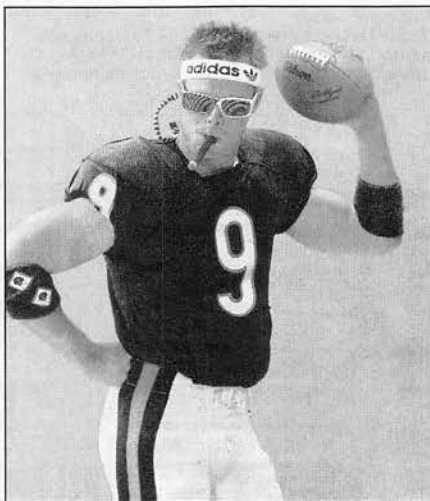
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EDITOR'S NOTE

"YOU'VE GOT TO BE YOUR OWN entity," said Jim McMahon while adjusting his Vuarnet sunglasses and lighting his cigar. "Do you think Steve Young would pose like this?"

McMahon wasn't taking a slam at the new



McMahon: part blues, part punk, totally crazy.

quarterback of the Tampa Bay Bucs, who earlier had succeeded him as quarterback at BYU. McMahon was emphasizing the obvious—that he likes to have fun on and off the field.

McMahon has proved to be a natural, damn-the-storms-ahead leader who isn't afraid to put his body on the line if that's what it takes to win. Jim McMahon believes losing is worse than death, injury, and not having fun. He's a throwback to the gritty likes of Bobby Layne and Joe Kapp. He's the antithesis of cool field generals like Bart Starr and Roger Staubach.

Led by McMahon, the Monsters of the Midway are back in Chicago. And thanks to McMahon and head coach Mike Ditka's newly innovative offense, a Bear team that once struggled to score a couple times a game is suddenly bombing the opposition with touchdowns aplenty.

Held in check by injuries and Stone Age game plans in previous seasons, the kid who set 71 NCAA passing records at BYU (where he also unnerved school officials with his wild living) has finally been turned loose by Ditka. The results are spectacular.

Above all, McMahon, who can't wait to retire "so I can play golf every day for the rest of my life," is a free spirit. His approach to

life and football brings to mind the aura the L.A. Raiders have projected over the years—brassy confidence, craziness, and a winning-is-what-counts attitude. The whole Bears team has suddenly adopted that philosophy.

Whether this cockiness can carry the Bears to their first Super Bowl, the same way it did the Raiders, remains to be seen. Meanwhile, for the first time in two decades, the team is exciting and winning. Steve Fiffer's insightful profile of McMadman of Chicago is on page 26.

AND, YES, THAT OTHER PICTURE accompanying this note is of Lisa Hartman, the breathtaking beauty who stars on CBS-TV's "Knots Landing." You'll see just how stunning she is next month when we

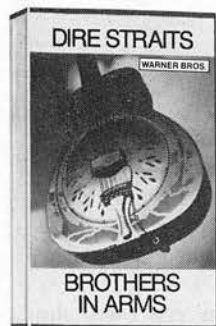


Lisa will brighten up our February swimsuit issue.

present our Annual Swimsuit Issue, but we just couldn't wait to let you know what is coming. Lisa will definitely take the chill out of your midwinter blahs. Our recent photo session with Lisa—which she generously granted despite a heavy filming schedule—was a smashing success. We agree with the Hollywood Press Club, which named Lisa "Female Star of the '80s." January 7 is the Swimsuit Issue on-sale date. Mark your calendar and hold your breath.

Michael K. Herbert

BUY OUT THE STORE



336222* Guitarist Mark Knopfler & Co.: single *Walk Of Life*; more.



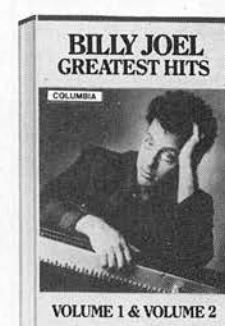
337519. Top 10 Album! Top 10 hit *What About Love*; others.



337394* This new smash album includes the Top 10 hit *Never Surrender*; etc.



337907. Title song, plus *This Could Be The Night*; *Dangerous*; many more.



336396-396390. Piano Man; *You're Only Human*; *Uptown Girl*; more.



336669. Top 10 smash *If You Love Somebody Set Them Free*; others.

- 336305 NIGHT RANGER 7 WISHES
- 338046 UB40 LITTLE BAGGARDIM
- 337634 THE MOTELS SHOCK
- 338707 ROCKIN' SIDNEY MY TOOT-TOOT
- 338343 FAT BOYS ARE BACK
- 338145 MARCUS ARTHUR PORTRAIT OF A DECADE ARTIST'S GREATEST HITS
- 337873 DIZZY GILLESPIE NEW FACES
- 335919 JEFF BECK FLASH
- 335802 BON JOVI 7800 FAHRENHEIT
- 335109 LEE GREENWOOD GREATEST HITS
- 334458 SAWYER BROWN
- 334375 DEBARGE Rhythm Of The Night
- 334185 WEATHER REPORT SPORTIN' LIFE
- 334052 TOM PETTY 4TH WAVELENGTH SOUTHERN ACCENTS
- 333278 MICK JAGGER SHE'S THE BOSS
- 332480 COMMODORES NIGHTSHIFT
- 328336 COREY HART FIRST OFFENSE
- 326629 Bruce Springsteen Born In The U.S.A.
- 328369 TWISTED SISTER STAY HUNGRY
- 332072 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK Beverly Hills Cop
- 333294 THE FIRM
- 333617 DAVID SANBORN STRAIGHT TO THE HEART
- 333971 MARY JANE GIRLS ONLY FOUR YOU
- 334391 WHITNEY HOUSTON
- 334433 CONWAY TWITTY DON'T CALL HIM A CONROY
- 334441 KENNY ROGERS LOVE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT
- 335117 JOHN SCHNEIDER TWYNN TO OUTRIN THE WIND
- 335778 HANK WILLIAMS JR. FIVE-O
- 335828 T.G. SHEPPARD Livin' On The Edge
- 337410 DION KINGDOM IN THE STREETS
- 338061 RAY STEVENS I Have Returned
- 338335 LANE BRODY
- 338350 THE FORESTER SISTERS
- 338699 MICKEY GILLEY FREE GOOD (ABOUT LOW) YOU
- 335620 AIR SUPPLY

- 338467 WYNTON MAREALL BLACK CODES (FROM THE UNDERGROUND)
- 337675 SHEILA E. ROMANCE 1600
- 339200 STEVIE WONDER In Square Circle
- 337923 THE MUSIC OF LORNE RICHIE SWEET LIBRARY ORCHESTRA
- 337899 The Very Best Of JANIE FRICKE
- 337386 JULIE ANDREWS LOVE ME TENDER
- 335539 MERLE HAGGARD HIS BEST
- 335067 JONATHAN CAMERON WITH LORNE RICHIE SWEET LIBRARY ORCHESTRA
- 334672 ROGER WILLIAMS To Amadeus With Love
- 333708 THE KENDALLS Two Heart Harmony
- 333344 WILLIE NELSON ME AND PAUL
- 333195 GEORGE BENSON 20/20
- 333112 ANDREA VOLLWEIDER WHITE WINGS
- 332395 RICKY SKAGGS FAVORITE COUNTRY SONGS
- 328047 Ferrante & Teicher Concert For Lovers
- 324996 THE CARS HEARTBEAT CITY
- 291914 Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits Vol. 1
- 287003 EAGLES 1971-1975 GREATEST HITS
- 322933 EDDIE MURPHY: COMEDIAN
- 332329 "Every Great Motown Hit Of MARVIN GAYE"
- 323915 BILLY IDOL REBEL YELL
- 325233 LIBERACE LIVE WITH THE LONDON PHILHARMONIC
- 326512 NIGHT RANGER Midnight Madness
- 327130 THE BEST OF MICHAEL JACKSON
- 328302 TINA TURNER PRIVATE DANCER
- 323965 DAVID ALLAN COE DARLIN', DARLIN'
- 333336 MOE BANY & JOE STAMPEL LIVE FROM BAD BOY'S MEMPHIS
- 338007 MERLE HAGGARD KERN RIVER
- 334045 THE BEST OF TONY MOTTOLA
- 334110 CHARLY McCLAIN RADIO HEART
- 334425 CRYSTAL GAYLE I WOULD HAVE TO BE ALONE
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- 335612 THE BEACH BOYS

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- 267351 DIANA ROSS' GREATEST HITS
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- 325183 DVORAK: NEW WORLD SYMPHONY SOLO GREGORY SYMPHONY
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- 334417 ERIC CLAPTON BEHIND THE SUN
- 334953 MEL McDANIEL LET IT ROLL
- 335000 GENE WATSON GREATEST HITS
- 338079 Richard Claydeman From Paris With Love
- 335604 MEN AT WORK TWO HEARTS

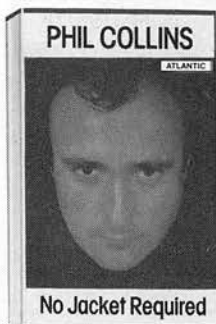
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- 335281 MILES DAVIS You're Under Arrest
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- 328559 MUSICAL MEMORIES WITH LAWRENCE WELK
- 327304 THE JACKSONS VICTORY
- 324616 CYNDI LAUPER SHE'S SO UNUSUAL
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- 322412 John Cougar Mellencamp UH-HUH
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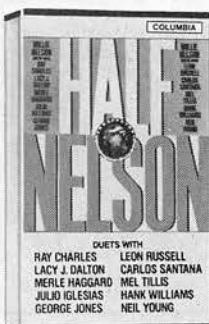
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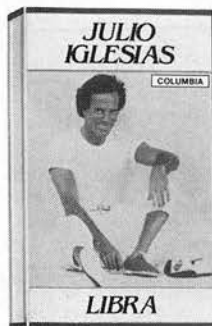
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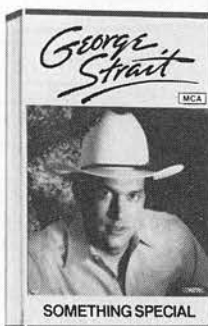
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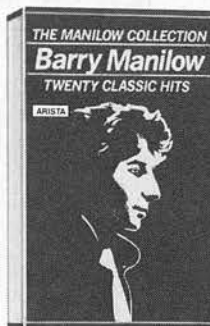
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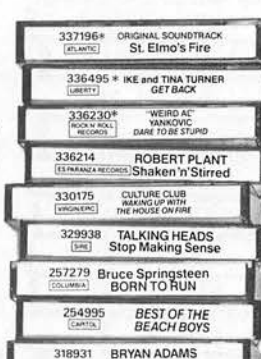
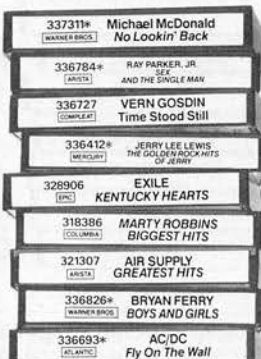
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TRIUMPHS

Otto Graham Proves Colo-Rectal Cancer Is Another Beatable Opponent

THROUGHOUT HIS STORIED FOOTBALL career, quarterback Otto Graham took on and defeated tough opponents. Planting his feet firmly behind the line of scrimmage and honing in with precision on the pass receiver, Graham led the Cleveland Browns to a 94-15-3 record over 10 years. More than a quarter-century later Graham matched his instinct for victory against his most formidable opponent—cancer.

"It hit me right between the eyes," said Graham. "Cancer is always something that happens to the other guy. I was too healthy, too athletic, too strong. Boy, was I wrong."

Graham had avoided a proctoscopic examination, a test for colo-rectal cancer, during his annual physical examination in the fall of 1978. A few months later he noticed a persistent pain in his lower back, which prompted a return visit to the doctor. While the pain turned out to be nothing more than a pulled muscle, the doctor insisted on the overdue proctoscopy. His diagnosis: colo-rectal cancer.

"I should have known better," Graham says now. "My predecessor at the Coast Guard Academy had died from rectal cancer. But he had had pain and other symptoms, and he had waited until the pain became unbearable before seeing a doctor. I, on the other hand, felt great. I really had no physical discomfort or any warning signs I was aware of. I was simply fortunate that I didn't wait a year until my next physical for the proctoscopy."

Graham, now a retired captain of the Coast Guard and a former athletic director of the Coast Guard Academy, checked into Bethesda Naval Hospital and underwent a colostomy.



Graham: no warning signs.

"While I didn't know much about colostomy surgery, or colo-rectal cancer for that matter, I knew I had been fortunate to catch the cancer at a time when it could still be treated. And I learned that if I had screened for the early hidden symptoms of colo-rectal cancer, I might have avoided extensive surgery," he explained.

Graham points out that colo-rectal cancer is something almost everyone is embarrassed to talk about, so there is very little knowledge about the disease and the importance of early detection. That's something he'd like to change.

"I've heard noisy rooms soften to a deadly silence when the words 'colo-rectal cancer' are mentioned," says Graham. "Even my closest friends sometimes have trouble discussing the subject with me. Unfortunately, such shyness has resulted in an astounding ignorance about the disease among the general population.

"My case of colo-rectal cancer, however, has helped me truly appreciate life's riches. More than ever before, I am grateful for every day I have with my beautiful wife, Bev, and for every moment we share with our three children and our 13 grandchildren.

"Today I am discovering new dimensions to my life. I assure you that every colo-rectal cancer patient I can make laugh again, and every high-risk person I can convince to screen regularly for this disease brings me a lot more satisfaction than throwing a winning touchdown pass before a sold-out stadium.

"Colo-rectal cancer is the beatable cancer."

TURF ENOUGH

Omniturf Brings Good Footing to Oregon

ON OCTOBER 27, 1984, RUEBEN MAYES OF WASHINGTON State made NCAA history by rushing for 357 yards against Oregon. He accomplished his spectacular feat on the only Omniturf football field in the country, at Oregon's Autzen Stadium.

"The field at Autzen was completed in 1969 with a synthetic turf," says Steve McBride of the Oregon athletic department. "It was replaced in 1976 and it needed to be replaced again before the opening of the 1984 season. We weren't sure whether we wanted to install



Autzen Stadium was the first to use Omniturf.

another synthetic surface or to go to natural turf, so we began investigating available alternatives."

The university was persuaded to go with Omniturf after Athletic Facilities Consultants, an independent firm in Portland, reported that: "Omniturf's unique use of sand, along with a one-inch pile height, should present the lowest footlock potential and a closer simulation of natural turf. The long pile and ability of the sand to give under lateral load should provide low abrasion potential."

McBride thinks Omniturf is the right stuff for Autzen Stadium, the first college facility to use it.

"We talked to people who are using Omniturf and studied the report from Athletic Facilities Consultants," he says. "The consensus about Omniturf was that it played like natural turf without its costly maintenance. It never needs to be watered, fertilized, reseeded, or mowed. Omniturf provides a more consistent playing surface, with none of the irregularities that natural turf often has. It's durable and easy to maintain. We'll be able to use it every day without worrying about damaging the surface."

Oregon football coach Rich Brooks has been pleased with the surface, too.

"From what I have seen so far," he says, "the Omniturf gives the players better footing and helps avoid slipping in wet conditions. Our players have been very positive about the softness and footing and, as I am, they're all excited about the fact that there is no longer abrasive paint on the field. The inlaid lines and numbers are a godsend, not only for the consistency of footing but also for the prevention of injury."

TIMEOUT

Trevor Matich Interrupted His Football Career To Work With Mexico's Poor

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS NO. 1 DRAFT CHOICE TREVOR Matich out of Brigham Young University took a year off from college (after his sophomore year) in order to be a Mormon missionary in Chihuahua, Mexico.

"I was in Chihuahua most of the time, but I lived in a number of places," said the 6'4", 266-pounder. "The middle-class home in Mexico is like a lower-class home in the United States. The walls are cracked and the plumbing is usually spotty. There were situations where 12 kids were living in one big bedroom. The people needed to learn how to economize and how to use a little plot of land for a garden so they'd have something to eat. It was quite an experience, a good life experience. It was rewarding, too, although not fun, per se. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything in my life, though."

"I learned a lot about life in the situation I was in for a year," he added. "I learned discipline; that's something I could carry back with me to football. I missed football, but it made me realize that things like hard work pay off."

While living in Mexico, Matich also learned to get along without eating very much. He ate only two meals a day for much of his stay and was down to a single meal a day at the end. "The last four months I ate mostly eggs, beans, and tortillas. When I finally arrived home, I kind of expected my mother to say: 'It's great to have you home. We missed you.' But the first thing she said was, 'What happened to you? You're so thin.'"

Matich's weight dropped to a low of 207. He went back to BYU and played his junior season at 240 pounds. "I appreciated what I had in my life a lot more when I arrived home, and it didn't take much time



Matich lost 59 pounds while in Mexico.

"Here I was enjoying all of this success, and I had decided to leave for a couple of seasons. But where would I be if I based everything on football? I was brought up to keep things in perspective. There was no decision to make."

"It's very difficult when you're 19 and you're thinking about football, college, girls, cars," said Matich. "What you're not thinking about is living the life of a missionary. But my commitment to powers greater than me was strong. I wanted to give something back."

COUPLES

His and Her Post-Olympic Careers

HUSBAND AND WIFE olympic medalists Davis Phinney and Connie Carpenter continue to shine in cycling, yet the two are headed in different directions. Phinney, who earned a bronze medal in last year's Olympic Games, has taken the professional cycling route, while Connie has taken on professional broadcasting. Their paths will continue to cross as they did at Philadelphia's U.S. Pro Cycling Championships and at the Coors Classic, where Davis rode and Connie commented for NBC.

While post-Olympic stardom meant millions to Mary Lou Retton, it hasn't been unkind for Carpenter. In addition to signing a multiyear contract with NBC, she joined the editorial staff of *Winning* magazine, inked a promotional contract for Ore-Ida, and became the national spokesperson for the Multiple Sclerosis Bike Tour program. Of all the associations, the MS Bike Tour is closest to the Olympic champion, because her mother suffers from the disease.

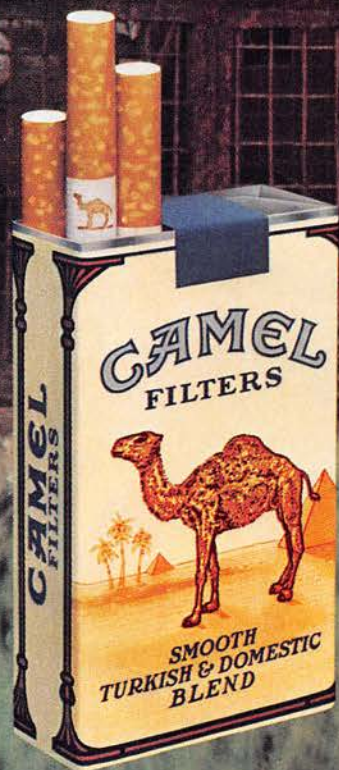
"If the women's tour was as much in place as the men's circuit, I might have continued to compete," says the Madison, Wis., native of her decision to retire after the Olympics. "My commentating work will help keep me involved in cycling. Besides, one pair of sore legs around the house is enough, and think of all the money we'll save on BenGay!" ■



Connie saves on BenGay.

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By BOB RUBIN

Hockey Scrambles Out Of The Cold Into TV Gold

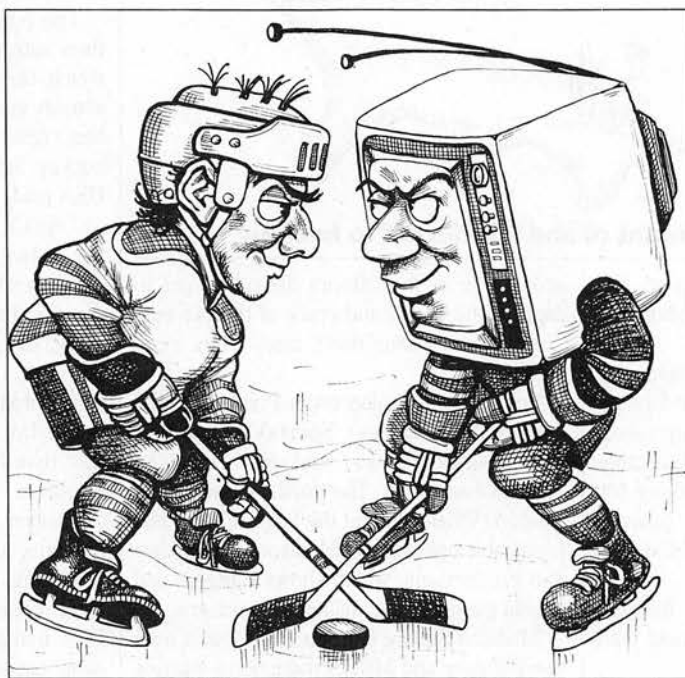
BESIDES TAX WRITE-off, the two sweetest words in the language to an American sport are "network contract." It's a ticket to big rights fees and priceless exposure, and, in the opinion of many sports moguls and would-be moguls, you can't be considered major league without one. Conversely, you can hardly fail with one.

Wrong and wrong again.

The late North American Soccer League and the brain-dead United States Football League offer proof that a network contract is by no means a guarantee of success. And with vision and imagination rare in the copycat thinking that goes on in corporate offices, the National Hockey League is doing very well without one, thank you.

The NHL has realistically examined its strengths and weaknesses both as a sport and a TV property, exploiting the former and minimizing the latter. Early on, it recognized the potential bonanza of a marriage with cable, and took full advantage. It is constantly scheming to find new ways to use TV to its advantage and prove, in the words of NHL vice president of broadcasting Joel Nixon, "You don't have to depend on money from skyscrapers on Sixth Avenue."

It's not that the NHL would be averse to the billions the National Football League and Major League Baseball get from the networks. NFL teams got more than \$15 million apiece this year before selling a single ticket, which makes the cry of poverty by some owners laughable. You've got to really try



The challenge facing the NHL was to devise a game plan that would take advantage of the passion and loyalty of fans who can't go to games. Cable TV provided the vehicle.

hard and be terribly creative to lose money with that kind of starting bankroll.

But the NHL knows such a bonanza is not in the cards. A glance at the map of the United States shows why. The NHL is simply not a national sport, and that's a death sentence to the networks, which must cast as wide a net as possible. Nixon summed it up in one sentence: "Their footprint is different from our footprint."

There are no NHL franchises south of St. Louis. From Florida all the way to Arizona, the booming Sunbelt is foreign territory, its population largely ignorant of, and indifferent to, hockey. This is football country. Ice is something that cools a drink. Wayne Gretzky? Ah say, son, who the hell is Wayne Gretzky?

And with the exception of an isolated colony in Los Angeles, the wide-open spaces of the West are also barren of hockey and interest in hockey. That leaves the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic region, and Midwest as the game's American bastions. Thirteen of the NHL's 14 franchises in this country lie in those areas, which is both a strength and weakness as it relates to TV.

Hockey's geographical weakness as a network property proved fatal a decade ago. CBS carried games from 1968 to '72, then NBC from '73 to '75, when the peacock people iced the puck permanently because of dismal ratings. New competition in the form of the expansion of Wide World of Sports to Sunday afternoons on ABC was a factor, but not the decisive one. Rebellion from affiliates in the South and

West was. By 1975, NBC clearance for NHL games had dropped to a meager 60%, based on a near shutout in those hostile areas.

A network lives and dies with its affiliates, and it can't dictate what they show.

"The station manager of an affiliate is totally autonomous," Nixon said. "His main responsibility is to do as well as he can in his local ratings book, and if the network feeds him something that doesn't go in his area, he'll say to hell with it and run a movie. I don't blame him."

So the NHL was out in the cold. For four years after being dumped it fought a holding action with marginally successful syndicated networks connecting cities in which hockey thrived. But there was fire in the ashes.

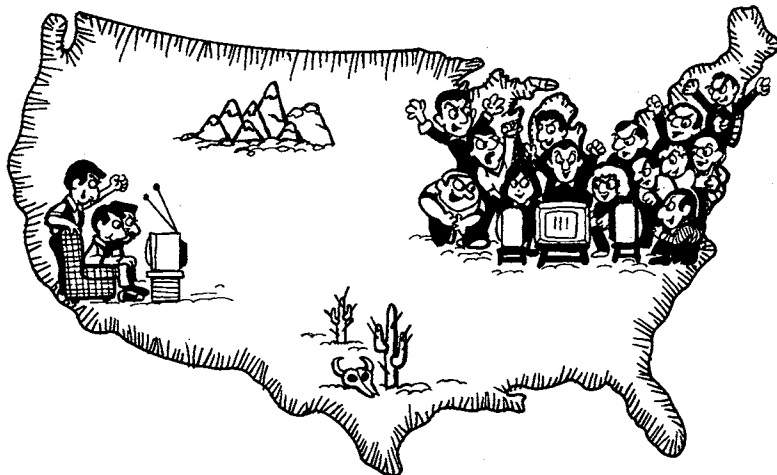
"Thrived" proved a key word. There may not be nearly as many hockey fans as those who follow football or baseball, and they may be geographically segregated, but those who love the game are card-carrying zealots who flock to arenas with Pavlovian predictability. The NHL played to 84% of capacity last year, a remarkable figure for a league that plays 80 regular-season games.

So the challenge and opportunity facing the NHL was to devise a TV game plan that would take advantage of the passion and

thousand new customers come aboard every month throughout the metropolitan area.

Doesn't such blanket coverage threaten the live gate? It would in any sport except hockey. Its fans are a different breed—nuts. If they can't go, they'll watch, despite the fact that the game is essentially lousy on TV.

It's hard to follow the puck. The broadcaster screams, "Goal!" but too often you miss it. There are no natural pauses for commentary and commercials as there are in football, basketball, and baseball. The tele-



The Sunbelt is ignorant of and indifferent to hockey.

loyalty of fans who couldn't attend the games. They did, with cable providing the vehicle.

The timing was perfect. Cable happened to be taking off just when hockey was looking for a partner. The interests of both dovetailed perfectly. The whole concept of cable is to provide specialized programming for specialized audiences, and thus provide alternatives to the homogeneity of the networks. Hello, hockey.

What evolved is a two-tier plan, its base strong local packages that are overlaid with national exposure.

Almost every NHL team has its own mini-network confined to its natural drawing area, usually within 50 miles or so of its arena. If a telecast goes beyond that (how far beyond varies according to a complex formula), revenue is pooled and shared equally by all teams in the league.

Long distances are a rarity. "The cliché is that interest lies within the shadow of the stadium, and we have found it's true," said Nixon, who pointed to an attempt to export games of the St. Louis Blues into 15 states via Cable TV. It flopped for lack of interest.

But on its own turf, hockey flourishes on TV. The pioneering city was Buffalo, of all places, which formed its own cable operation in 1975. In 1979, SportsChannel in New York came on line with Islander games. This year, it will televise all home, away, and playoff games to some 450,000 subscribers, who pay \$8-\$10 extra to get them. Five to 10

scopic eye of the camera doesn't begin to capture the speed and grace of the players.

But hockey fans don't care. They need their fix.

SportsChannel also owns Prism in Philadelphia (Flyer games), SportsVision in Chicago (Black Hawks) and New England SportsChannel in Hartford, Conn., and Boston (Whalers). But the largest individual local cable operation is Madison Square Garden Productions, which shows Rangers and Devils games to 1.2 million subscribers.

Madison Square Garden Corp. owns both the Rangers and MSG Productions, putting it in the same enviable position as Ted Turner, owner of the Atlanta Braves and their TV distributor, superstation WTBS. At this writing, Jerry Buss (Turner West) was planning to wed his own TV operation to his basketball Lakers and hockey Kings, who both play in his Forum.

The strength of these local packages figures to grow greatly as cable continues to expand beyond the 46% of the country it now reaches, and especially when it penetrates the inner cities. It has been easier to first hook up the suburbs, where busy roads don't have to be torn up.

NHL cities like St. Louis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Detroit are not yet wired, and Chicago is just starting. Only Manhattan gets cable in New York, which has the country's largest TV market with 6.5 million homes. So the future of hockey within the shadow of the stadium looks rosy.

The national tier of the NHL's TV plan began in 1979 with a package on United Artists-Columbia Cable Network, which became USA. Then and now, the cable network blacks out the home cities of teams involved in its telecast, leaving it to the locals.

"Our thinking was that these national cable networks were, in essence, giant anthologies, and we thought we could be a chapter," Nixon said. "We thought we could be a circulation builder for them in parts of the country that weren't getting our games, because there are a lot of people transplanted from hockey cities.

"A cable programmer is trying to offer something for everyone. He could say to a viewer in Pensacola, Fla.: 'You moved from the Northeast. We offer hockey on at least one of our nights.' Maybe he'd buy the service because of that. It was, in fact, a missionary effort."

The NHL was on USA through last year, then signed a three-year deal with ESPN, which this season is showing 33 regular-season games and the All-Star Game, and has rights to the playoffs. ESPN bought hockey for \$8 million a year, double what USA paid.

That's a 100% increase in rights fees, but the actual money involved is still paltry compared to what the network boys on Sixth Avenue throw around. Still, the NHL skates along, thanks in good part to fiscal sanity on the part of its owners. With an average salary of \$152,000, hockey players are hardly in need of food stamps, but they still earn less than half their baseball and basketball brethren.

Salaries, of course, are closely tied to TV revenue, and TV revenue figures to soar in the future. In addition to the ever-increasing cable penetration and resultant growth of local markets, the NHL is noodling with some experiments. One is the idea of a local outfit such as SportsChannel picking up another game on nights its home team is off; another is the use of pay-per-view when the required technology comes on line.

"I don't know how many years down the road we're talking," Nixon said, "but our underlying goal is to get the game to the fan who wants it, one way or another."

The traditional way, via the networks, isn't available, so the NHL has been forced to scramble.

"If our lives depended on national TV, we'd be in a bad way," Nixon said. "We've had to be innovative. We don't have those millions coming in from the skyscrapers on Sixth Avenue." ■

Contributing editor BOB RUBIN lives deep in the Sunbelt, but he's so into hockey that he thought 'The Iceman Cometh' was the story of Wayne Gretzky.

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With all the publicity this season surrounding Pete Rose in his quest to break Ty Cobb's record, I was wondering who held the record for career hits when Cobb broke it?

J. T., Lincoln, Neb.

You can bet it didn't generate nearly the hoopla that Rose's 4192nd hit did, but it was Honus Wagner's record Cobb broke in 1923 with hit number 3,430. Wagner won eight National League batting titles for the Pirates in the early part of the century en route to a



Honus is sixth on the hit list.

career .329 average. One of the first players inducted into the Hall of Fame, Wagner now stands sixth on the all-time hit list behind Rose, Cobb, Hank Aaron, Stan Musial, and Tris Speaker.

Are there any teams in professional sports that have never won a world championship?

C. W., Chicago

Since 1960, expansion has increased the number of teams in Major League Baseball from 16 to 26, the NFL from 12 to 28, the NBA from eight to 23, and the NHL from six to 21. Most of the new additions to their league the last quarter-century have not won championships. But of the 42 sports franchises that started before 1960, only the Detroit Pistons have failed to bring their fans a title. The Pistons originated in Fort Wayne in 1948, and moved to Detroit in 1957. The closest the Pistons came to winning it all was

1954-55, when they bowed to the Syracuse Nationals in the NBA finals in seven games.

How did former pitcher Tug McGraw get his nickname?

B. R., Ridgewood, N.J.

When Frank Edwin McGraw was a youngster, his mother breast-fed him. According to Mrs. McGraw, "He was a real tugger." And the name stuck.

Who was the first NHL player to use a slapshot?

J. D., Aurora, Ill.

Bernie (Boom Boom) Geoffrion of the Canadiens and Andy Bathgate of the Rangers, high-scoring right wings, were the first players to experiment with the slapshot in the 1950s. But the man who receives most of the credit for introducing the slapshot was Bobby Hull, the longtime Black Hawk great who led the NHL in goals scored seven times. Hull introduced a slight curve in the blade of his stick, which helped his slapshot travel in excess of 100 mph. The shot quickly grew in popularity and is now a favorite weapon of many NHL players.

Which was the first NFL team to use the shotgun offense?

S. O., St. Cloud, Minn.

The 1961 San Francisco 49ers, under head coach Red Hickey, were the first NFL team to use the shotgun formation, in which the quarterback takes the snap five to seven yards behind the center. With quarterbacks John Brodie and Bill Kilmer at the helm, the 49ers rolled up high scores early in the season using the shotgun. But by mid-season, opposing coaches had found ways to defense the formation, and the 49ers offense faltered the rest of the year. Hickey did away with the shotgun after the season, and it didn't surface again until 1975, when Dallas Cowboys head coach Tom Landry used it occasionally in passing situations with Roger Staubach at quarterback. Dallas had failed to make the playoffs in 1974 for the first time since 1965, and Landry felt he needed something to spice up the offense. The Cowboys were successful with the shotgun in 1975, and before long, other NFL teams followed suit and incorporated it into their offense. Today, it is used throughout the league, and is partly responsible for the heavy emphasis on the passing game in recent years.

Has Wayne Gretzky played for any professional hockey teams besides the Edmonton Oilers?

R. S., New York City

Unbeknownst to many fans, Gretzky did *not* break into the hockey ranks with Edmonton, but with the Indianapolis Racers, an old WHA team that signed The Great One to a multiyear contract in May 1978, when he was 17. Gretzky had three goals and three assists in eight games for the Racers in 1978, but in November, Indianapolis, which was having



Gretzky, at age 17, played for the Indianapolis Racers in '78.

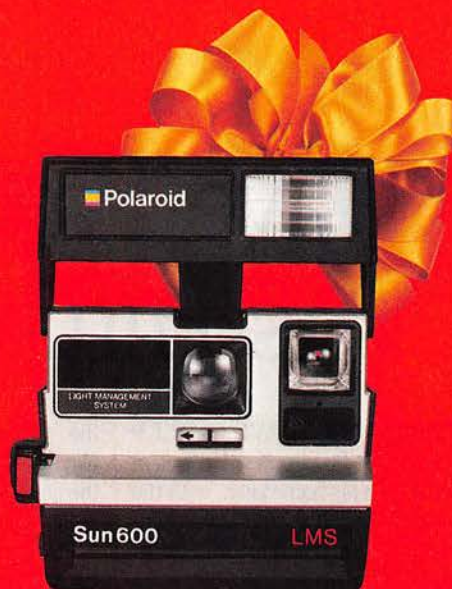
serious financial problems and would disband soon after, traded Gretzky to Edmonton along with left wing Peter Driscoll and goalie Ed Mio for cash. Gretzky registered 43 goals and 61 assists for the Oilers in 1978-79, the WHA's final season. The next year, Edmonton merged into the National Hockey League, and Gretzky developed into hockey's dominant force. ■

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By LONNIE WHEELER

Dave Parker: His Image Is Hitting .300 Again

TWO YEARS AGO, DAVE PARKER was considered bad news. He was at odds with the fans in his hometown, with the press everywhere, and, it seemed, with himself, too. All the while, his fearsome talent was retreating in the time of trouble and a booming career was sadly and inexorably going bust.

The Cincinnati Reds figured to be the last team to take him on. For one thing, the Reds had never hired an expensive free agent, and for another, the Cincinnati clubhouse was not exactly considered a final refuge of free speech. The Reds had been producing enough bad news on their own without going out and spending real money on it.

But Parker and the Reds curiously concurred on several points—notably that the big outfielder was the best gamble in the free-agent market of '83; that a return to Parker's hometown might put some bounce back in his hobbled legs; and that perhaps all of the ugliness in Pittsburgh was Pittsburgh's doing as much as Parker's.

Now, after Parker's two smashing seasons in Cincinnati, it seems remarkable that two parties with reverberating reputations for their wrongs could have been so resoundingly right. Parker has not only been the slugger the Reds have missed since George Foster was traded, he has been the best thing to come into the Cincinnati clubhouse since shoe stripes.

From the day he appeared at his first Reds press conference—trim, amiable, and cleanly shaved—Parker has been everything but trouble in Cincinnati. In 1984 he recovered from a string of bad seasons with a .285 average and 94 RBIs, and last season topped that with his most productive year ever (.312, 34 HRs, league-leading 125 RBIs), including 1978 when he was the National League's Most Valuable Player and generally considered to be the best player in

the game. Furthermore, he—along with player-manager Pete Rose—has provided the soul of a previously hapless team that had been searching for one.

"His presence in the clubhouse doesn't surprise me," says Rose. "I was real close to him in Pittsburgh. Whatever you read about him there never came from the other players or the manager. It was always from outside people, because one thing Parker always did was bust his tail on the field."

The only blight on Parker's 1985 season came, ironically, in Pittsburgh, where he testified in the trial of Curtis Strong that he had used cocaine while playing for the Pirates.

In the Cincinnati clubhouse, though, Parker has been clean in every way but his use of humor, which is as foul as it is funny. Parker's ribald wit is one of the league's creative best, and he wields it like the heavy lumber he carries to home plate. His teammates, willing foils, are generally overmatched. Fortunately for members of the media, however, Parker is more gracious toward them.

INSIDE SPORTS: Since you've been in Cincinnati, you look like you're having fun in the clubhouse and on the field. Were you having fun your last couple of years in Pittsburgh?

DAVE PARKER: I was having fun prior to those last couple of years in Pittsburgh. I think Pittsburgh was an outstanding place to play for myself up until '79. There were little spurts of resentment before that, but I think that was enhanced more in '79.

IS: When you're having a good time, like you have the last couple of years, how much does that affect your performance?

DP: Enormously. Just to go out and play in a good atmosphere. It was extremely tough for me to play those last couple of years in Pittsburgh because the atmosphere wasn't

ideal. I think these last couple of years in Cincinnati have sort of rekindled a fire inside me to play the game again.

IS: Were you aware that there was a fire missing?

DP: Oh, yeah. You know anytime you get to the point where it becomes kind of hard to go to the ballpark because of the things that are going to happen after you get in there. I knew that I was in to be heckled in my last couple of years in Pittsburgh. This past year I was at the ballpark at 3:30 or 4. In Pittsburgh it was even dragging out to 5 or 5:30, where I would just walk up, do a little BP, come back in, and play the game.

IS: Since you've been here, you've probably been the best influence of any player in the clubhouse. But before you arrived, people expected you to be surly and a negative influence. Do you think it's that you've changed that much, or have people just completely misunderstood you?

DP: No change. I'm in an environment where I can more or less be myself. I don't have to be defensive. I can also say the media hasn't been that friendly to me, either. I mean, there were a whole lot of unjust things written and done to me from some of the media around Pittsburgh. I'm in an environment now where it's a fresh start; the people are accustomed to million-dollar salaries. I think I was just victimized by being the first. So it's just an opportunity to come in and be me, and this is me that I'm reflecting. I'm not fronting for anyone.

IS: How hard was it to play in a city where fans threw batteries at you?

DP: It was tough. But like I say, that's past. I very seldom even like to talk about it. It was something that happened. I think it was bad for me, and it also reflected something negative about the fans, too.

IS: Do you think your career would have turned out the way it has the last couple of

years if you had remained in Pittsburgh?

DP: That's hard to say because I didn't experience it. I tried to stay there, but it just got to the point where it was virtually impossible to negotiate with them, and after that, like I said, I talked to several other teams. I would have stayed if we could have worked out terms. One of the things I wanted to do in the city of Pittsburgh was to fulfill my obligation, simply because of all the negative things that had happened.

IS: How much has the attitude on the Reds changed since you got here last year?

DP: It's changed enormously. I think Pete [Rose] has contributed a lot to that. He emphasized the fact that the only way to have fun in this game is to win, and he emphasized that if you go out and do your job and do it properly and have success at it, you're gonna make money.

IS: Do you think it changed most when Pete took over?

DP: I think that was one of the major keys. You know, winning has been a tradition with Pete; it follows him wherever he goes. He's a fun man to play for because he's very humorous. He has this special thing where he's kind of a universal personality as far as being able to relate to the players, and also able to be stern when

it's necessary to be stern in his role as a manager, and I think that's a unique quality that's going to make him a great manager. Chuck Tanner had the same thing.

IS: Where do you think your future with this team is—in the outfield or at first base?

DP: It's really hard to say. If Pete's going to try to get that 150 or more runs scored, I'll be in the outfield a couple more years. But after that, I'll probably play first base. I'm working at first base as much as I can. I'm kind of gearing for it, because we've got some outstanding outfield talent—Eric Davis, Paul O'Neill, Gary Redus, Eddie Milner, Cal Daniels—we've got so much young talent, it's going to be amazing. So I figure pretty soon I'll probably be moving into first base and give these young players an opportunity to

show their stuff, too. Because, I mean, when you've got players like Daniels, Davis, you got to let those boys play, because Davis is destined to be a star in this game. He's got all the tools. He's got speed, he's got power, and he's a great defensive player.

IS: Even though he's manager, is Pete's role here comparable in any way to Stargell's role in Pittsburgh?

IS: Meek, you're not.

DP: No, I'm not necessarily meek. I think what I display on the field could be contagious in itself. When I work with guys like Eric Davis, if I see something that I feel he's doing wrong or something that could help him in his career, I definitely reach out and extend myself to him or any of the other young players. If I can say something that

will lighten a player who's having problems, I extend myself that way, and that's what Stargell did.

IS: Obviously, you take your role seriously in terms of needling and getting on players. But you generally seem to do it in a baseball sense. Is this deliberate, that you want to be loose but you want to keep your mind on baseball?

DP: Basically, I can get a whole lot of points across that way. But it would go beyond my responsibility as a leader on this ballclub to needle an individual about something away from the ballpark.

IS: Who's your favorite guy here to pick on?

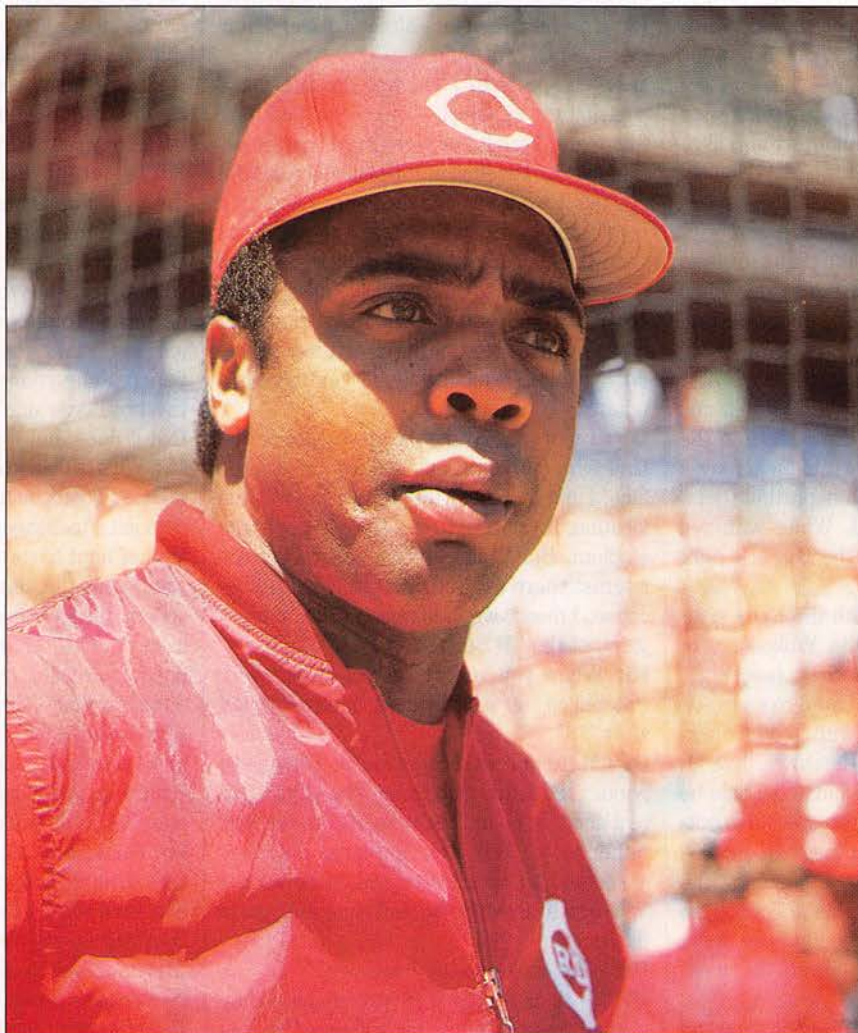
DP: Actually, my favorite player to pick on would probably be Eddie Milner. Milner's the strongest individual on this club, pound for pound. And he has a great sense of humor himself. He can take it real well and he dishes it out real well.

IS: Who's the best at giving it back to you?

DP: Believe it or not, Pete Rose, for one, and I think the other one would have to be Marty Brennaman, the announcer. And Milner does a good job.

IS: Your humor, a lot of it is street humor. Did you pick it up from your friends as a kid? Does your father have that kind of humor?

DP: My father is a superfunny man, one of the funniest men I've ever met in life. But I think growing up in my neighborhood you had to have a sense of humor. We had a thing that we called "playing the dozen," and that was where we criticized another individual's family and criticized the individual, and it got to the point where you might criticize the individual's parents, and that's when it went to fisticuffs.



'I'm fortunate that I got up and walked away from drugs.'

DP: I would say somewhat, especially to the younger players. Pete has enormous respect, certainly, for his accomplishments. These younger players respond to his simple presence. Stargell, in my situation in Pittsburgh when I was a young player, tucked me under his wing. I think Pete is doing it on a wider scale. He's influencing more than one individual. I think Stargell had a major influence on me, and he concentrated on trying to prepare me for what it takes to play baseball and become a star.

IS: Is your role here comparable to Stargell's in Pittsburgh?

DP: Pretty much so, except I don't portray the meekness, the mildness, I think, that Stargell did. Frankly, I try to lead through example.

IS: The whole game was to see who could get the best insult?

DP: Exactly. Don Rickles would have loved it.

IS: The guys you played with in your neighborhood, were they tough?

DP: It was a tough neighborhood. It was a very competitive neighborhood. It was a very sports-oriented neighborhood. Most of the kids I hung with could hold their own.

IS: What was it like inside your house? Were people screaming and getting on each other like you do here?

DP: No, no. Dad would say something very humorous if you did something wrong, like, "Hey, what's going on, Bump-Jack-Head?" or something like that.

IS: Who was the player you most admired?

DP: Vada Pinson and Frank Robinson stood out in my mind. Frank gave me a glove when I was a kid and that clinched him as my idol, so to speak.

IS: What were the circumstances?

DP: I was hanging around the ballpark, and he happened to have an extra glove in the trunk of his car and he gave it to me. He was driving a white T-Bird with porthole windows. Vada had one, too. White with red interior. They came into the ballpark right behind each other.

IS: Before you signed with the Reds after '83, you had talks with the Yankees, too. Would that have been your first choice?

DP: I'll tell you, I really wanted to go to Atlanta. We had some talks with Ted [Turner] before we made any real decisions. I've always liked Atlanta as a city, but at the time he couldn't make up his mind on one of his outfielders, and the fact that Cincinnati showed some real genuine interest, I jumped at the opportunity to come home. We also talked to Houston and to Steinbrenner in New York. But the Cincinnati club showed the most interest.

IS: Before you became a free agent, you had about three years where your numbers decreased. Did you ever have to convince yourself that you were still the hitter you were in the late '70s?

DP: Not really, because I think I had a lot of injuries that contributed to me not being able to produce. I know in '83 I started to show signs of the old Dave Parker coming back. I had some severe ligament damage in my wrist, I had Achilles' heel problems, I had knee problems. There were various things that kind of hindered me. But I always had believed in myself and it was just a matter of time. What enhanced me wanting to come back and put the numbers back on the wall was having people tell me that I'm through. You know, the so-called baseball professionals. I feel like when you've got outstanding ability, and being regarded at one time as the best player in the game, I didn't believe

people could tell me I was through if I didn't believe it myself.

IS: Did people tell you that?

DP: Oh, you know, it was written. I don't think anybody had the guts to come up to me and say it face to face, but it was written. And it just kind of shows that what I believed in myself was factual. I've been productive for the last two years, and I think a change in environment had a major part to do with that.

IS: How much can fans affect a player? How much did they play on you?

DP: The problem I had was the fact that I contributed so much—after the death of Clemente, I think I played a major part in re-establishing baseball in Pittsburgh—and the fact that I went through the injuries and they responded to me in that way was what was mind-boggling to me. And I think it made me rather defenseless, and actually hurt about it.

IS: With the attendance situation being what it has been in Pittsburgh the last few years, do you think Pittsburgh deserves to keep a team?

DP: I can't really say, because I know the fans who did come out are very dedicated fans. I just feel that a lot of the gripe was the location. It was tough for people to get to the stadium. But I think there's got to be more interest there for a team to stay there, because, I mean, we didn't even sell out every game of the '79 Series.

IS: When you reflect on your time with Pittsburgh, do you divide it before '79 and after '79?

DP: More or less. I came in '73. They had a good, productive club then. The guys were real good guys and the response to me was rather good. But after the large contract, it seemed to deteriorate and that's been a mystery to everybody, including me, up to this point.

IS: What broke up the Fam-i-lee?

DP: I think losing key personnel. They started trading people the caliber of the Jim Bibbys, the Mike Easlars. Stargell's retirement played a major part in it. It just stopped being a family atmosphere.

IS: Did you and Stargell get things straight after that little thing between you last year?

DP: I talk to Willie. You don't burn a friendship like Willie's. I think one of the key reasons for me signing with them after I had threatened in '79 to go through free agency because they wouldn't renegotiate, so that I could fulfill my dream with Stargell. I mean, that's how deep our friendship was. So some incident as a book can't cast any long-lasting shadow on a friendship such as that.

IS: What about with the thing after the drug trial and his reaction to that, do you think you'll still be good friends?

DP: Hey, all I could do was tell the truth. Under that situation, I was up there and I had to tell the truth, and I told the truth.

IS: Willie's reaction was that he didn't take kindly to it.

DP: I had no idea what it was going to do. I went up there and they told me to tell the truth and I told the truth. That was one of the stipulations of going into the trial with immunity was to tell the truth.

IS: Bill Madlock made comments that he didn't like what you said at the trial, either. Do you expect you'll still be friends with him?

DP: I think a lot of both of those guys, but I think a hell of a lot of me and my family as well. I did what I was required to do. As far as elaborating on who's right or wrong, I don't have to get into that. I told the truth.

IS: Is there anything that you want to say to the public about the drug thing, about cocaine—a message for kids or fans?

DP: I think it's gonna come to a point where I will be speaking to youth groups, probably pertaining to the problem. It's a major problem in society and it's something that happened in the young stages of my career. At the time, you don't really see the damage that it does, but it does do damage.

IS: What would your message be?

DP: It's gonna be hard for me to sit here and pinpoint a message to you right now. It's just kind of hard to miss [drugs] in today's society. From the time you leave elementary school through high school, you're gonna have to cross those streams of young adulthood. You will cross the streams of somebody possibly directing it your way. My suggestion would be to stay away from it. I think just gear yourself toward a career and achieving something in life, and if it's at all possible, just stay away from it.

IS: Would you call using drugs destructive?

DP: Yeah, it's destructive, without a doubt. I've seen what it has done to some people. I consider myself one of the fortunate ones who could get up and walk away from it, but everybody's probably not as strong.

IS: When you think in terms of your career and what you've accomplished, do you ever get down on yourself for letting a couple of prime seasons get away?

DP: I kind of think in terms of that sometimes. But the way I play the game, I've got to expect to be injured. I try to approach every game like it's the last game of my life, and playing as hard as I did led to a lot of injuries. I think if I could have stayed healthy, if I could have prevented gaining the weight, the things I could have done . . . But on the whole, even with all of that happening, I think I've had a pretty fulfilled career.

IS: You talked about being called the best player in the game around '78. Was that a distinction you really took seriously?

DP: At that time, I like to think there were very few people who could do all the things I could do on a baseball field. It was something they said initially. I didn't say it. So

evidently the baseball profession thought so as well.

IS: After your production slipped a couple of years, was it hard to handle the fact that you weren't the best player in the game?

DP: I'm a realist. I had injuries and that was that. How would you categorize me now as a player in the game in this league?

IS: You've got a shot at MVP.

DP: Well, then, wouldn't I be considered one of the better players this year in the game? So it's a year-by-year thing. I think if you're on, you're going to be productive. If you're off, you're not. It's just like going out there every day—if the pitcher's on, he's gonna get me out; if he's not, I'm gonna hit him. It's kind of hard to say who's who. I think my overall stats this year are some of the best in the league. McGee's having a phenomenal year; Guerrero's having a phenomenal year; Herr's having a phenomenal year—there are quite a few guys having phenomenal years, but I've been pretty productive in all categories.

IS: How big a role does ego play in hitting?

DP: Hitting? I refuse to be embarrassed at the plate. I mean, this is war. If you throw me a change-up and make me look bad, it just wakes me up and makes me want to hit you that much harder next time up. Pride is what it is. Just pure pride.

IS: I've heard you say—I don't know if it was kidding or not—that you're the best hitter in the league. Was that just clubhouse talk?

DP: I think I'm a bona fide hitter. I think I'm a .300 hitter. I have a lifetime .300 average. I would like to consider myself one of the better hitters in the league.

IS: Is there any difference in thinking you're the best and one of the best?

DP: I prefer just thinking I'm one of the best. That's undue pressure to go out and say that you're the best at something. That way, everybody shoots at you. I would just like to be put in there as one of the best hitters in the league, which means that there are a lot of great hitters, and for you to hold precedence over talent such as it is in the major leagues, that would be foolish for anyone to say.

IS: Was there a point at which you decided in your career that you were going to start pulling the ball and go for the long ball?

DP: Baseball is a major adjustment. People were getting me out up and in. For a while I got so messed up because I wasn't hitting the ball with the authority I was accustomed to that I started trying other things, and that got me all entangled. I think lowering my hands and opening up my front foot has made me pull the ball more, because they pitched me in. See, I adjusted to them, and now they've got to adjust to me.

IS: They haven't adjusted to you pulling the ball?



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'I refuse to be embarrassed at the plate. I mean, this is war.'

DP: I think the teams that are in contention are the ones that try to pitch me away. They don't want me to beat them. But there are still people who think they can muscle me inside with the fastball. That's like, "Come into my parlor," said the spider to the fly.

IS: What do you want to accomplish before you retire?

DP: I'd like to retire with a lifetime .300 average. I'd like to compile maybe another batting title before I go, but I definitely want to leave the game as a .300 hitter, and if there's any way possible, to get 3,000 hits.

IS: That surprises me a little bit, because Rose said you're not the same hitter you were in '78. He said you're different because you pull the ball more than you did then. He said he figured it's because you won a couple of batting titles and figured you didn't have to do that again.

DP: I think I am the type of player who can hit for power and hit for average, too. Playing in a park like Cincinnati, where the walls are very reachable and not extremely high, because of the way I hit down on the ball I think I can do both. If I can hit, say, .335 or .340 one year before I retire, I think I can win a batting title with that year. McGee will

get 30, 40 infield hits a year. I'm not going to get that anymore, but I think as long as I can maintain my speed I'm going to be close to 200 hits.

IS: How much do you think about the Hall of Fame?

DP: It would be a great thing to do. A lot of people may think I put too much emphasis on finance, but my thing is that my family is secure. I've got to be content with that, and anything that comes after that would be great. The Hall of Fame is probably the greatest honor that can be given to a player. All I can do is play as long as I can. And all I'm gonna do is play as long as I can play for pride. I'm not gonna hang on. If I'm not being productive, I'm not playing. So, hopefully, I'll be able to be productive enough to try to approach getting 2,500 hits—maybe 3,000 hits if I can stay healthy long enough. If I do, I'll just let them decide in the end.

IS: The process of reinstating your good name, do you think it's complete now?

DP: I can't worry about that. I gotta be concerned how my family feels about me to start with, and I think it's the same way with anybody. I would like to think that the people who know me genuinely know me as an indi-

vidual who is a caring individual, a concerned individual for other people. Other than that, I can't satisfy everybody. It's virtually impossible. But I've got to be fairly content if my family's content with me and I'm content with myself. That's all I can worry about.

IS: How important is it for you to develop an image that kids and fans can look up to?

DP: I've worked with youth groups throughout my career. I've participated in a lot of charities, the United Negro College Fund—I've actually been with just about every charity they've had in Cincinnati. I've given free clinics in the city of Cincinnati even when I was a Pittsburgh Pirate. So, like I said, [the drug thing] happened in the young portion of my career. I'm not necessarily proud of it, but it's something that is in my past and I'd like to leave it there.

IS: Was that—the youth angle—important to you previously?

DP: Oh, without a doubt. When I was a kid, there were people who took time out with youth and tried to gear them toward something constructive, a simple athletic thing. We had an individual by the name of Charles Hudson who had a knothole baseball team, and I think if it wasn't for him I might not be a baseball player. My mother and father did a great job as far as keeping me out of trouble. My father's thing was going out and providing for his family. Mr. Hudson, he kind of aroused that interest in baseball and made me see that I could possibly have a future in the game because of my ability. I kind of stood out to him. So he took a personal interest in trying to guide me along the right tracks.

IS: Do you have confidence that if you have a couple of more solid seasons here and work in the community, that your name will ring a positive bell?

DP: I wouldn't want my name to ring a positive bell because of my baseball production. I'm gonna be involved in the community. Everybody's gonna have different opinions of Dave Parker, and that's something I can't be concerned with. I'm gonna do what I think is best for myself. I'm gonna do what I think is best for youth, because everything is geared toward youth. So, if that does reinstate my good name, so to speak, then fine. But I'm not campaigning for any office. I'm going to be doing a lot of these things in my spare time because I've got a genuine concern for youth. Because you've got to save the youth to make the world better. If there's anything I can say or do to have an effect on some kid's life, hey, I'm gonna be out there trying. ■

Free-lancer LONNIE WHEELER believes it's easier to maintain one's image in Mom-and-apple-pie Cincinnati. Lonnie's last piece for I.S. was on the unblemished Pete Rose.

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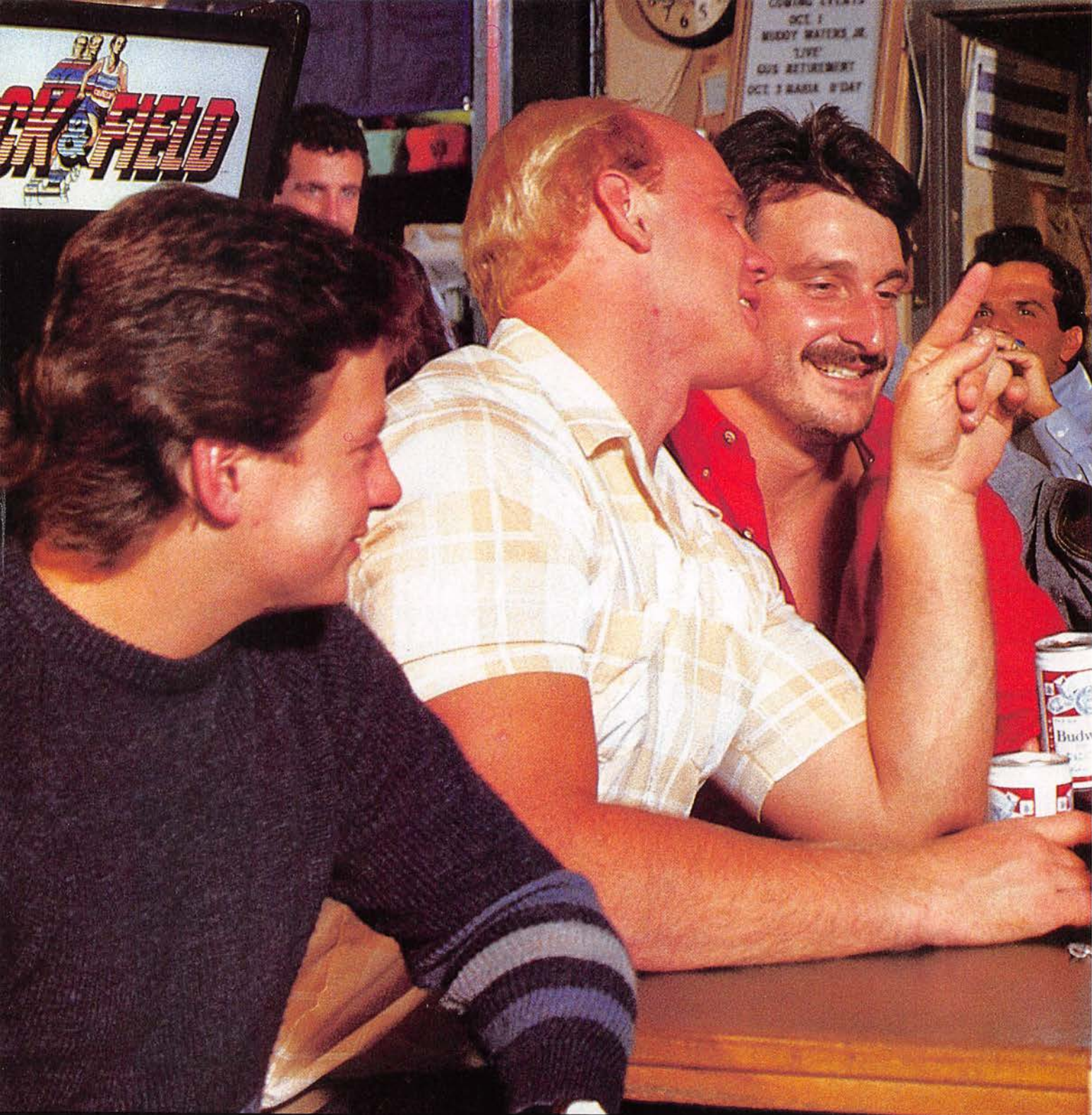
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The Bears' Jim McMahon is 'wild,' 'crazy,' and 'different,' and he knows that to stay a winner, and in one piece, he has to keep his offensive line happy

By Steve Fiffer

IT HAPPENS EVERY SPRING. A limousine, fresh from O'Hare Airport, pulls up to the Chicago Bears' Halas Hall, perhaps the most beautiful training complex in the National Football League. It is a time of rebirth in this sylvan setting one hour north of the city. The trees are alive with green. The birds are back. And the presence of the limousine, which carries the team's No. 1 draft choice, symbolizes that the Bears, too, are coming out of hibernation.

This was never more true than in 1982. Spring heralded the arrival of a new head coach and, it appeared, a new quarterback. The coach was former Bears hero Mike Ditka. The quarterback, whom the limousine now carried, was Jim McMahon. McMahon, a consensus All American, had set 71 NCAA passing records while at Brigham Young University. During his junior and senior seasons alone, he had thrown 75 touchdown passes.

The Bears had not spent a first-round pick on a quarterback since 1951, and, drafting fifth, they had been surprised and elated to find McMahon available. The franchise had fallen on hard times, enjoying only three winning seasons since 1966, Ditka's last with the team. The defense, long the team's hallmark, remained strong. But the offense, despite the presence of the nonpareil Walter Payton, had foundered. Such quarterbacks as Bob Avellini, Vince Evans, and Mike Phipps simply could not lead the Bears across the goal line. Neill Armstrong's 1981 squad had averaged under 16 points a game.

The limousine stopped. Ditka and the rest of the Bears brass looked forward to their initial meeting with McMahon. It was a time of renewal and first impressions.

Coach, do you remember that encounter?

Ditka: Yup. He came into the office out of the limousine drinking a Budweiser.

What did you think?

Ditka [shrugging]: I thought he was thirsty. [He scratches his head.] What are you gonna think? I knew right then he wasn't out to impress anybody here with good manners and good behavior.

What did your scouting reports say about this kind of thing?

Ditka: There were no negatives. He was a different kind of guy, but you don't really know that until you meet him personally.

Jim, do you remember that meeting?

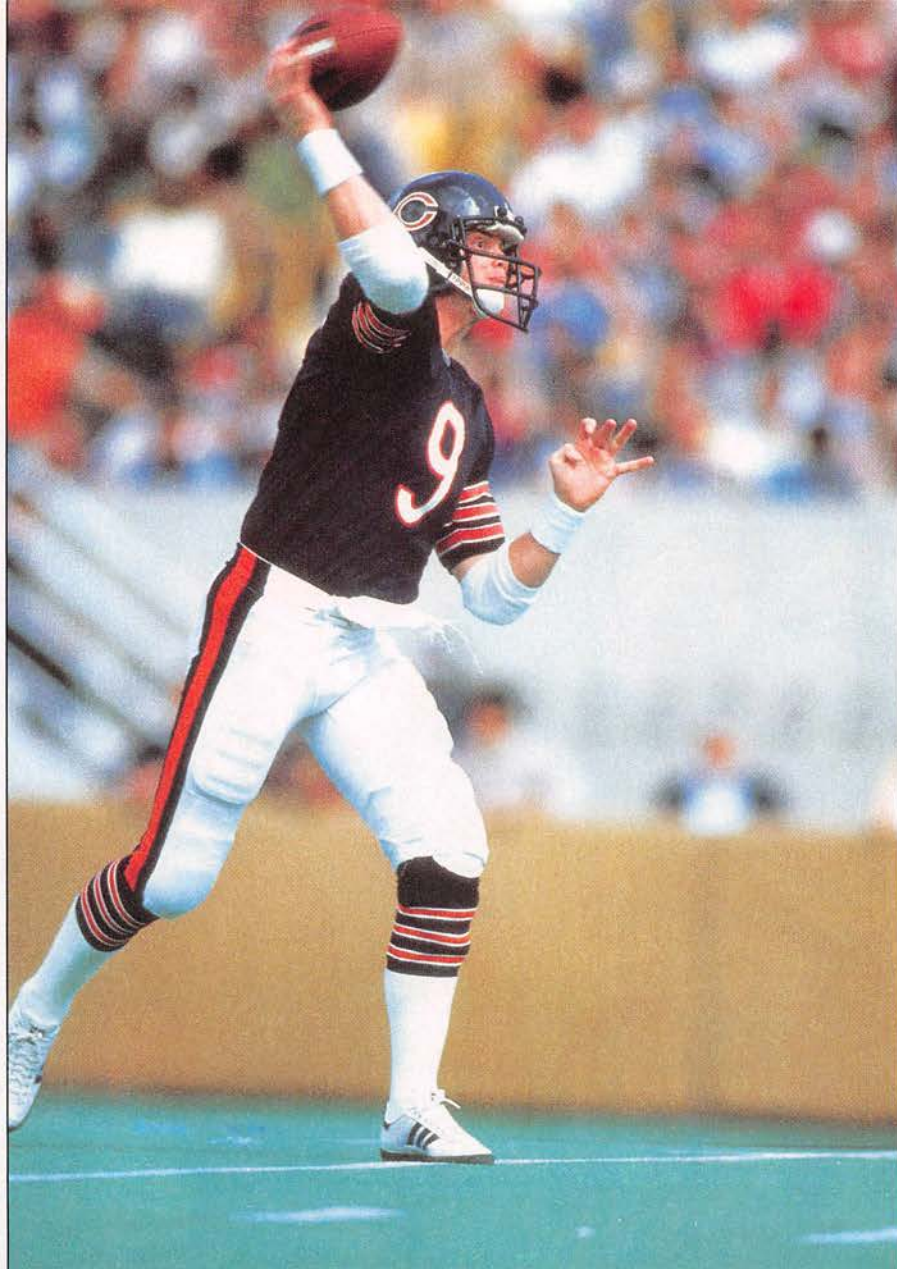
McMahon: I was thirsty.

Weren't you a little intimidated going up to meet Ditka and the rest of the brass?

McMahon: No. I didn't see any reason to be. Somebody gets drafted No. 1 every year.

What should the scouting reports say about you?

McMahon: Be alert at all times—you never know what he's going to do. [He



'I never could accept the fact that you have to lose.'

scratches his head.] I don't even know what I'm going to do half the time.

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL fans rejoice. The National Football League is now blessed with its most refreshing and colorful signalcaller since Joe Namath (that's Joe Namath, the quarterback; not Joe Namath, the commentator). Jim McMahon is his name, and depending on which reviewer you listen to, he's "different" (Ditka); "confident" (former college teammate and best friend Dan Plater); "wild" (Bears tackle Keith Van Horne); or "crazy" (McMahon). He also happens to be "a great leader" (Bears receiver Dennis McKinnon). And if he stays healthy this season, he just might lead the Bears to the Super Bowl.

How different is McMahon? Says Ditka: "You think about the quarterback position, OK? The guy with the cleanest uniform, the so-called general, but he's never really in the

battle with his troops. Well, Jim's just the opposite of that."

How confident is McMahon? Plater, who was McMahon's favorite receiver at BYU, recalls the Holiday Bowl their junior year. The Cougars were trailing SMU by 20 points. It was fourth down, 15 yards to go, and only three minutes remained in the game. Coach LaVell Edwards sent the punting unit onto the field. "Jim came storming off and started yelling at the coach," says Plater. "He screamed: 'What are you doing? Quitting? Are you giving up?'" Edwards sent McMahon and the offense back in, and they scored 21 points to win the game.

How wild? "Sometimes I wake up and realize I'm lucky to be alive," McMahon says. There was the time in Hawaii, for example, when after a game, McMahon didn't feel like going to bed. His cure for insomnia? "I just climbed over our room's balcony (it was on the hotel's 24th floor) and

started swinging," he remembers. "My teammates told me I was gonna kill myself, but I swung down to the 23rd floor and knocked on the window to have them let me in." Unfortunately, the room was vacant, so he had to climb back up from where he'd come.

How crazy? Last season McMahon and Bears guard Kurt Becker invented a new way to celebrate Bears touchdowns. After the team scores, the quarterback butts helmets with each of his offensive linemen. The participants do not take this celebration—which sounds like it would be more appropriate for the Rams—lightly. "We try to knock each other out," McMahon says with remarkable calm.

Needless to say, some of these exploits have created a bit of tension between McMahon and his superiors. McMahon, who is Catholic, had entered BYU only because Notre Dame, his first choice, had failed to recruit him. It didn't take balcony-hopping to draw heat from officials at the university and the townspeople of Provo, Utah, where the school is located. The quarterback drew fire and brimstone by simply confessing that he enjoyed drinking beer, chewing tobacco, and playing golf without any shoes. "That would be looked at as normal anywhere else," says McMahon's wife, Nancy, whom he met in college. "But because BYU is Mormon, it caused a lot of trouble." To this day, McMahon believes that the university did not aggressively promote him for the Heisman Trophy because of its objections to his off-the-field behavior.

As for the helmet-butting, after McMahon showed up in the Bears training room earlier this season with a mysterious back ailment, Ditka put the kibosh on kabooming. McMahon insists the injury had nothing to do with the butting. "But now whenever I go looking for linemen after a score, they avoid me," he laments.

Such shunning marks just about the only time the quarterback is not to be found horsing around with his line. "Our relationship with Jim is special," says Van Horne. "He likes to feel he's part of the line, and vice versa. It's different than with other quarterbacks."

Different is the operative word. "I'll come into the huddle and swear at them and they'll spit on me," McMahon says. "The referees think we don't like each other, and sometimes I'll see the other team looking at me like I'm a crazy son of a bitch."

McMahon and Becker, his roommate on the road, seem to have a special affinity for each other on game days. "Once when we were playing Tampa Bay, I was walking back to the huddle and all of a sudden, bam! Someone had belted me on the side of the head," says McMahon. "I turned around and

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it was Becker. He said, 'Why don't you do something today, you S.O.B.' So I kicked him in the ass." On another occasion, McMahon found Becker underneath him in the pileup after a quarterback sneak. "I said, 'I'm gonna shove the ball up your you-know-where,'" McMahon laughs, "and then I started hitting him. The refs said, 'Hey, you guys are on the same team.' We're different. We try to have fun out there."

THEY TRY TO HAVE FUN OFF the field as well. During the season, McMahon and the line go out for dinner and drinks at least once a week. So it was that on the Thursday before this season's Redskins game, a party of eight consumed some 15 pitchers of beer and untold trays of crab, mussels, and shrimp at The Half Shell, a popular Chicago restaurant. It was McMahon's turn to pick up the check, which came to more than \$400.

Still thirsty, the crew—they looked and acted like oversize fraternity brothers—then moved to Alcock's, a Loop bar where the menu consisted of Coors, Budweiser, and Heinekens. The center of attention wherever they go, the players were quickly surrounded by admiring women. At one point, the owner of the bar jokingly asked an attractive patron if she thought she could handle the entire Bears offense. "I don't know," she shot back. "I've never taken on more than two at a time." McMahon and the unmarried Becker looked at each other, exchanged high fives, and then butted their unhelmeted heads.

Why the linemen and not, say, running backs or wide receivers? Says McMahon: "I've hung out with linemen since I was in high school. I appreciate what they do for me. Besides, you get one of those guys mad at you, and they can get you hurt in a hurry. All they have to do is pretend to slip and they could let a guy come right in on me."

McMahon has had enough injuries to know whereof he speaks. When he was six years old, he lost control of a fork he was using to untie a knot. The fork went into his eye, permanently reducing his vision. The 1984 season was a particularly dismal one, too. McMahon broke his hand against the Broncos during Week 2, but recovered and was leading the Bears toward a divisional title when he suffered a lacerated kidney in the Raiders game eight weeks later. That injury ended his season and almost his career. This season he has been hospitalized with back problems and with a seriously infected leg.

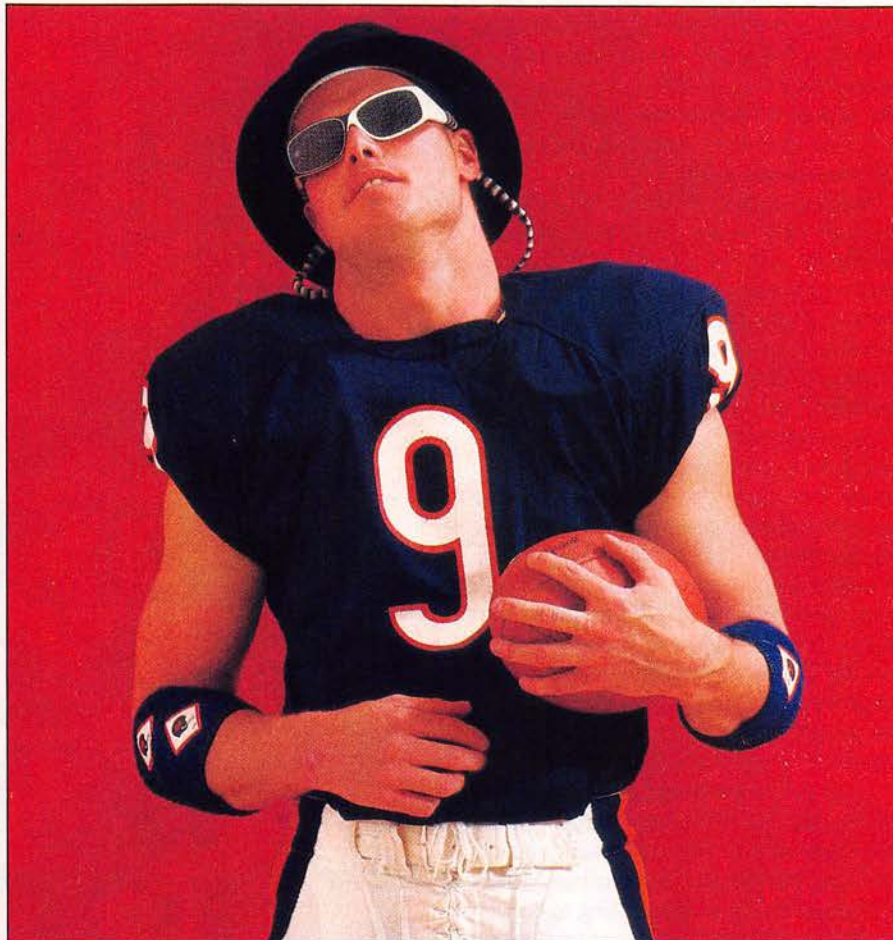
The kidney injury had a somewhat sobering effect on the normally happy-go-lucky 26-year-old. "When you're lying there in the hospital and they tell you they're going to give you a transfusion for an operation that

could end your career, you gotta stop and think: 'What's going on here?'" he says.

While McMahon attributes the run of injuries to "the fates," others suggest the injuries may be due to his running. "Jim really thinks he's our best passer, thinks he's our best runner, and thinks he's our best blocker," says Ditka. "He'll do anything he has to do to get it done. A lot of quarterbacks wouldn't do that, and they shouldn't do it,

when he's out there. He brings out the best in the whole offense. That was evident in the Minnesota game. That was a miracle."

The Minnesota game, played before a national television audience earlier this season, may have been McMahon's finest hour, or at least finest seven minutes. Condemned to the sidelines because his back and leg ailments had left him unable to practice during the week, McMahon paced restlessly



'The other team will look at me like I'm a crazy son of a bitch.'

because that's a position you can't afford to lose."

Says the quarterback: "I don't mind the physical part of the game. I'd like to go a game without getting hit, but that's part of football."

Says the coach: "I just wish he'd become more discreet, but the only thing he sees is the goal line or making a first down. He doesn't do it for show. He envisions himself a winner and us as winners."

Says the quarterback: "The coach says not every play can be a good play. There have to be bad plays. Why? Why do they have to be bad? You can salvage something."

The philosophy has endeared him to his teammates. "He's a catalyst, a spark," says Van Horne. "You see how hard he plays the game, so you go and put out an extra effort."

Adds McKinnon: "We play over our heads

as the Bears offense sputtered during the first half. More than once he told Ditka that he felt fine and was ready to help. Finally inserted during the third quarter with the Bears trailing 17-9, McMahon called for a screen pass on his first play. The Vikings blitzed, and as McMahon stumbled back into the pocket, Payton picked up a hard-charging linebacker. Regaining his balance, McMahon looked downfield and saw receiver and world-class sprinter Willie Gault running even with the Vikings cornerback. "I just let the ball go because I knew Willie could get it," says McMahon. "Then I got hit. I didn't see him catch it, but when I heard the crowd kind of silenced, I figured it out."

The 70-yard touchdown bomb was followed by an even more remarkable score on the very next Bears snap. Forced to scramble, the quarterback spotted McKinnon rac-

ing toward the goal line past Viking defender Joey Browner. McMahon threw while running to his left—perhaps the most difficult play for a right-handed quarterback. McKinnon caught the perfectly thrown ball without breaking stride, and the Bears took a lead they would never relinquish.

McMahon's next pass was dropped, but it took only five more snaps before he had thrown for his third touchdown in less than seven minutes. Again, while scrambling to his left, he found McKinnon for a 43-yard score. So surprised were the Bears linemen that they forgot their orders and allowed McMahon to butt helmets with them.

If the 33-24 victory over the Vikings was the Bears' most dramatic, the 38-28 win over Tampa Bay in the season opener may have been the most important. For years, the Bears have relied on their defense. But in the season opener the underdog Buccaneers had already scored four touchdowns by halftime to take a 28-17 lead. Said McMahon: "There aren't too many times since I've been here that we've even scored 28 points in a game. Maybe a lot of Bears teams in the past would have hung it up. But on this team we've got too many guys who hate to lose." The Bears scored three second-half touchdowns to win 38-28.

THE BEARS DEFENDERS, WHO in the past have been openly critical of the offense's impotence, have been impressed by McMahon's ability to get the team into the endzone. "We have more confidence in the offense this year," says All-Pro linebacker Mike Singletary. "The biggest thing about Jim is that he's a winner. That's the bottom line of it all. The kid wants to win. He's got his own style, but he gets things done."

Why is he getting things done this year? "I'm just much more comfortable with our offense," explains McMahon. "The first couple of years I was bothered by our offensive philosophy. I couldn't understand why we did certain things at certain times. I was so used to dropping back and throwing the football, that to turn around and hand it off 35 times a game was new to me. Now I'm comfortable. Things are changing."

Still, McMahon admits that there are times when he and Ditka are simply not on the same wavelength. "I like Mike as a person," he says. "I would have loved to play with him. But he has his reasons for the way things should be done and I have some of my own. Sometimes they don't mix. I think he finally knows that I know what I'm talking about. I'm not just trying to do things that will upset him. I'm trying to relate things into our offense that I think will help us."

Ditka acknowledges that he and his quarterback do not always see eye to eye. "You



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have to deal with a lot of personalities on our offense," he says. "We've got a great runner. I don't think you can win by just throwing the ball, but I think you can complement the other facets of your offense with a sound passing game."

Untroubled by McMahon's frequent lobbying for more throws, Ditka has nothing but superlatives to describe almost every aspect of McMahon's game. Here is Ditka on:

● **McMahon, the thinker:** "His knowledge and his vision of what's going on seem to improve from game to game. He doesn't have to spend as much time with film as others. When he sees something, he remembers it. When you tell him something, he remembers it. Once he knows what you want him to do, he's good at translating that to his receivers and teammates. The other thing he's become so good at is audibling out of bad situations. He likes to do what he thinks will beat the defense up there."

● **McMahon, the scrambler:** "He has a great feel for the rush, and that's unique. A lot of quarterbacks never feel the rush, but he feels it, and he slides away from it. When you can do that with success, it becomes very frustrating to the defense. They feel that if they've beaten their man, they've earned the right to tackle the quarterback. But all of a sudden, he's not there. He reminds me of Tarkenton. He doesn't scramble for the sake of scrambling. He scrambles to make things happen, to find a receiver."

● **McMahon, the leader:** "I tell you, where he goes, they go. They follow. He leads by saying: 'Hey, let's go. We're gonna take this hill over here, fellows.' He doesn't really say how. He just says: 'C'mon, we're gonna do it. I've got a plan.' Then he draws it in the mud and they go."

There is one area in which Ditka would like to see his young charge improve. Says the coach: "The only thing I'd like to see with Jim—which is not going to happen—I would like to see him more serious. The times he's serious and the times he's not serious—the ratio isn't 50-50. He's less serious than he is serious, and that can be a distraction."

Ditka worries not that this will affect McMahon's performance, but that other, less-gifted Bears might begin to slack off in practice. For this reason, he wishes McMahon would spend more time looking at films and preparing for the next game.

While McMahon relishes leading his teammates on the field, he refuses to be his brothers' keeper on any day but game day. "That's where we get into conflicts with the head man," McMahon admits. "I think everybody's gotta get himself ready to play in his own way. I'm not saying what I do is right for everybody. They may need the film time. But then it's up to them to do it. They're getting paid to do a job, too."

He has a ready reply for those who find him lackadaisical on the practice field: "I've never enjoyed practice. Practice is practice. It's not a life-and-death, win-or-lose situation. It's something you have to get through each week in order to get to Sunday. Sunday, that's show time. What's the use of having your best day on Tuesday? That's not gonna win you the game."

WINNING IS EVERYTHING IN McMahon's world. "It doesn't matter what you're playing," says Van Horne, "racquetball, cards—he hates to lose more than anybody." Nancy McMahon remembers backgammon games in the college dormitory. "I got so I could beat Jim, but he wouldn't quit until he'd won the last game of the night," she says. Plater remembers a hockey set: "I beat him the first time, and he went off and practiced and practiced until he could beat me."

McMahon pleads guilty on all counts. "I remember throwing that hockey game all around the house," he says. "I've never liked losing. I never could accept the fact that you have to lose, even though I know it's going to happen. I'm better at it now than I was, but I don't like it. I never will like it."

It was Nancy who refused to let McMahon get new golf clubs until he promised to stop breaking the old ones. "I told him I didn't care if he had the money to buy new ones," she says. "That wasn't the point." (McMahon does, indeed, have the money. In 1984, the Bears tore up his initial contract and he signed a new one worth approximately \$5 million over the next five years.)

Golf has become McMahon's offseason passion. "I could play every day of the year," he says. "I love that game. It's you against the golf course. When I hit a bad shot, I think: How can that have happened when I just hit the ball perfect the shot before. One little mistake and the ball is everywhere."

He insists that when he retires from football all he wants to do is play golf. "I don't want to work," he says without any guilt, recalling his last nonfootball employment. "One summer at BYU I got a job on a farm digging fence posts and cleaning out the barn," he says, his nostrils flaring as if the smell of the barnyard had invaded the present. "After one day, I said, 'Bullshit on this.'" He spent the rest of the summer living off roommate Plater's limited income. A cherry tree in the back yard of their apartment building provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the better part of two months, while McMahon played dominoes, drank beer, and played golf in his bare feet.

McMahon currently carries a 12 handicap, making golf the one game he has failed to master. A three-sport star at his high school in Roy, Utah, he never really considered

becoming anything other than a professional athlete. He was recruited to play basketball by several colleges, but declined. "You just don't see too many six-foot white guards anymore," he laughs. He was also good enough to seriously consider playing professional baseball. "I finally gave that up because baseball players never seem to be home, and I knew I would want to have a family some day," he says.

He hopes time doesn't run out before he accomplishes his ultimate goal—winning the Super Bowl. "In the end," McMahon says. "A good quarterback is a guy who won. Look at Terry Bradshaw. They said he'd never be great, but he won four Super Bowls. To me, he's probably the greatest just because of that. And Joe Willie [Namath]. He didn't have the greatest stats, but he won the Super Bowl, too. Then there's someone like Fran Tarkenton, with all the career records, yet he never won the big one. And he had the opportunities. He was a good quarterback, but it's wins and losses that count."

Although he is most often compared to Tarkenton, the scrambler, it is the brash Namath with whom McMahon identifies. "He was different," says McMahon. "He came out and said things and did them. People just weren't used to that. Bart Starr was always real quiet. Same with Unitas. But Namath was different, and that's the way I want to be. I don't want to be like Joe. I want to be like me, be my own man."

Best-friend Plater sees no danger of McMahon being mistaken for anyone but McMahon. "He doesn't mold his life after anybody, doesn't do what other people want him to do," says Plater. "Jim McMahon has grown up the way Jim McMahon has wanted to grow up. Maybe that's why he's happier than the rest of us."

IT IS LESS THAN 72 HOURS BEFORE the Bears are to take the field in a rematch of last year's playoff game against the Redskins. The now familiar Budweiser in hand, McMahon is trying to give the 6'7", 280-pound Van Horne a piggy-back ride. "I like to have fun," he says. "In my opinion, you're put here to have a good time. One of Ditka's favorite lines is: 'You gotta have a chip on your shoulder to play the game.' You do, but why have it on when you're away from it? In the end, everybody's gotta die and face their Maker. I can deal with that. I'm happy just to wake up in the morning. With some of the crazy things I've done, I'm lucky just to be here." ■

Contributing writer STEVE FIFFER would love to be a Bears offensive lineman, but 16 Thursdays a year out with McMahon might be too much for Steve to handle. His last I.S. piece was on Clark Kellogg's finances.



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The Winning Mind Of Bill Walsh

By HANK NUWER

DISGUISES. BILL WALSH HAS A million of them. No doubt you recall Super Bowl XVI, when the 49ers coach, clad toe to cap in a bellman's uniform, carried Joe Montana's bags for him. Or think back to that 1980 team meeting (after the Niners had booted eight games in a row) when Walsh donned a cabbie's hat and announced, "I'm free-lancing—if anybody needs a ride home, I'm available." Then there's the awards banquet in Rocklin, Calif., that he crashed. Walsh startled Montana, guard Randy Cross, and former San Francisco great R. C. Owens by masquerading as an 1849er prospector, complete with wire specs and fake beard.

But not all his disguises are successful, reveals Geri Walsh, Bill's wife of 30 years. "One time he was outside the house pretending that he was the Easter Bunny," she chuckles. "The kids then were roughly about two [Craig] and six [Steve]. He was wearing a mask, but it [the bunny hop] wasn't nearly as successful as that bellhop trick in Detroit. The kids didn't fall for it, not at all."

That the kids knew who *was* that masked man speaks well for their perspicuity and badly for Walsh's acting ability. The story serves as an epiphany for the man Bill Walsh really is deep down despite the role-playing disguise he flashes in public. There is a lovable side to the hoary-haired, stone-faced disciplinarian standing so emotionless on the sidelines while thousands of frenzied 49er fans cheer his every complicated move. It's a side that seldom is seen, because it's a warm, vulnerable, human side, and he displays it only when he has failed or is faced with failure. His ebullient, rock-loving, 25-year-old son Craig's favorite memory of him is the time Dad assembled a pool table "that

*Portrayed as a cool,
calculating, stone-
faced egotist,
this coaching
genius also has a
warm, vulnerable side*

leaned and collapsed like the Tower of Pisa." And wife Geri chuckles enigmatically when asked pointblank what her husband is like in private. "I don't think he'd like you to know!"

WHAT BILL WALSH *WOULD* like you to know is that he's a winner, a man who is good at what he does. At everything he does. Whether it is pounding a tennis ball, leading a political discussion, or creating the most complex offensive playbook in the history of football. "I think he likes to think he has to be the best at whatever he strives for," is how Geri sums him up. "He's dedicated, thorough, and a workaholic."

And yet this master tactician who has garnered two Lombardi Trophies in but six seasons as a head coach in the pros seems discontented despite his success. Again and again he has announced his impending retirement, only to withdraw it when some fresh success stimulates him to pick up his shield and walk the war trail once again. The closest Walsh came to packing it all in was in the aftermath of his Super Bowl XVI victory, when rival coach Forrest Gregg mocked Bill's admitted lack of ability as a college player, and wolves behind every tree sneered at what seemed to be his greatest moment. In short, people were telling the greatest coach in the world he wasn't *really*

the greatest coach in the world. Think how you'd feel if you were—hell, the Easter Bunny—and people kept telling you that you weren't *really* the much-loved rabbit, but only some impostor that had stumbled upon a basket of golden eggs.

"He found it so difficult hearing things people were saying, that the year before had been a fluke," said Paul Hackett, Walsh's quarterbacks/receivers coach, after his boss elected to stay. It wasn't until last January 7th, scant days before the 49ers' domination of Don Shula's Dolphins, that team owner Edward J. DeBartolo revealed his coach's promise to honor the last two years of his existing contract. Walsh himself told reporters gathered in the 49ers' unpretentious Redwood City facilities that anything like "an average year" would have been his last as head coach.

Some harsh things have been said in print about the tall, grandfatherly Californian. *The Washington Post's* Tom Boswell called the coach "estimable," but panned "his strung-too-tight intensity and his barely disguised assumption that he's a cut above his profession." Boswell reviewed him as a man with "vanity" who "had been choking on his own brilliance for nearly 20 years." The caption with the photo of Walsh that accompanied the article snipped that "Bill Walsh's accomplishments don't yet equal his self-image." In other words, take away his two Super Bowl wins and his 6-1 playoff record, and whaddya got? An admittedly ho-hum regular-season mark of 49-40 entering '85, with such dismal years as '79 (2-14), '80 (6-10), and '82 (3-6) soiling Walsh's resumé.

Perhaps the comment that stung the hardest was the harpoon hurled by an unnamed "critic" (quoted last January by Frank Litsky of *The New York Times*) who charged that "Walsh's ego is so big that he needs a separate locker for it." (As a result of the



charge, perhaps, Walsh seldom utters the personal pronoun "I" when he discusses himself. He uses the royal "we" so often you begin to look nervously around the room to see who in hell else he's talking about.) Faced with the quote from the *Times*, Walsh seems genuinely puzzled, displaying no ire in the carefully constructed response he gives.

"I've seen the ego remark, but I have a difficult time with it because I don't understand it," rebuts Walsh. "I think a person who is egocentric generally can be spotted through the people working around him. They're afraid of him, or they don't trust him, or they don't have confidence in him. I just don't see that in our organization. Maybe to some people, ego is showing a lot of confidence, showing a lot of pride or too much of it—but I don't understand it [the charge]."

INTERVIEWING WALSH IS MUCH different than jabbing a mike in front of a gabby guy like John McKay or somebody folksy like Bum Phillips. You feel something like the time you nervously encountered your sternest college prof to try to change your grade from a "D" to an "A." You study the patrician nose, the engraved lines on the forehead that come after 54 years on this planet, the casual but expensive brown sweater and slacks, and the most famous mop of white hair on a man since Robert Frost's. And you wonder if he'd like to trade his recognizable face for a less classic, more anonymous model.

"I don't know that I miss anonymity, but you are on stage an awful lot when you're in public," he says. "I can't say that I necessarily appreciate it sometimes, but the one thing I appreciate is that people from all walks of life, every age group, and from every ethnic and economically different background, all acknowledge the 49ers and tend to acknowledge me. Whether they be San Francisco Chinese, Chicanos from San Jose, blacks from Oakland, whatever, we're acknowledged, and *that* I appreciate."

Unlike the Redskins' "hog" community and what was once Oakland's band of lovable thugs, no one can accuse San Francisco of hiring its Niners from Central Casting. Walsh has no problems accommodating kick-return specialist Carl Monroe's lengthy locks, defensive end Fred Dean's disdain for a Spartan training regime, linebacker Riki Ellison's combativeness, and tight end Russ Francis' love for swift, big Harley-Davidson motorcycles and free-falling from airplanes. The coach is blind to all external idiosyncrasies of his players as long as the team shares the goals and aspirations of management, namely to kick hell out of the rest of the NFL.

"We do have a lot of individuals, and they

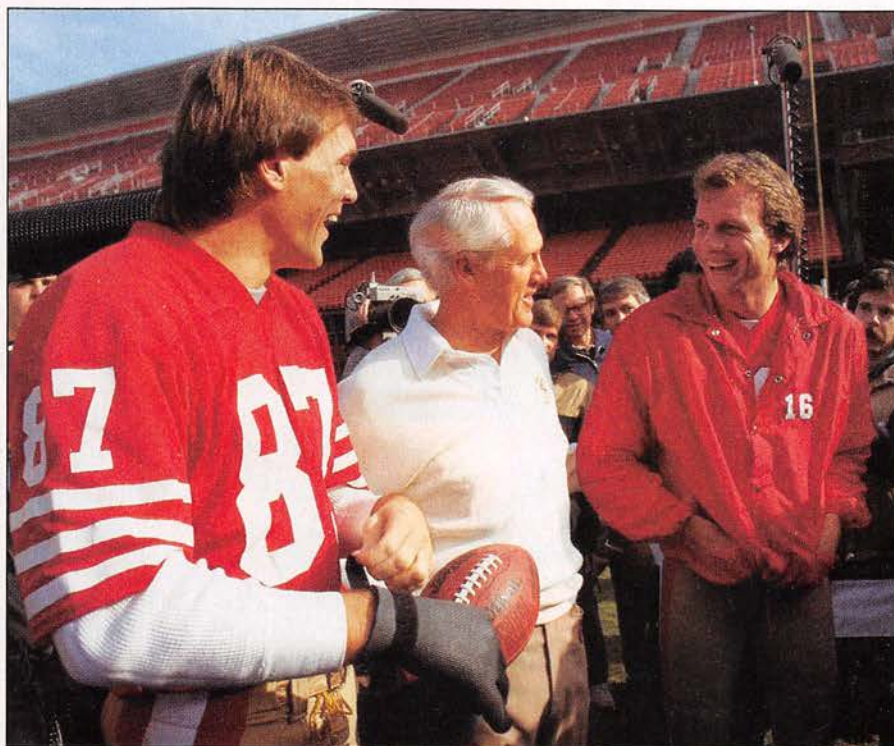
all play a role and blend beautifully together on the field," says Walsh. "This is a very selfless team, and yet we have a lot of players who are unique. I've no objection as long as they meet the same criteria that the rest of the players meet. I willingly took on Thomas [Hollywood] Henderson, which, of course, didn't work out, but we've taken on Fred Dean and other players with their own personality who did."

What Walsh and his team cannot appreciate is someone whose idiosyncrasies side-

under Walsh—whose goal is to star into his 40s, à la Blanda and Stenerud, and who last year led the NFL with 131 points.

"Bill's unique," insists Wersching. "He has a real grasp of what he's going to do. He instills confidence in me because I know *he* has confidence in me. That helps me perform. I'm not always looking over my back."

Walsh's theory is that a player who succeeds with him does so because the player needed a new environment, not because of any special talent his head coach has for



Walsh has a knack for developing receivers and quarterbacks.

track the team from winning. There are only 20 members of the 1981 Super Bowl team remaining on the 1985 roster. Hollywood Henderson was quickly discarded when his moves failed to match his mouth. And when Russ Francis alienated his teammates by pouting on the practice field when Walsh refused to start him three years back, the coach showed the famous but nearly hidden rage that smolders beneath the preppie sweaters he favors. Walsh allegedly melted the Astroturf when he blistered Francis with a lecture, and Russ—a free spirit but no dummy—responded by playing *and* practicing with a fury.

Francis is but one of the many retreads that Walsh has installed on his Niner machine and coaxed another 100,000 miles from. In particular, the coach has enticed productive years out of free agents other teams have spurned, including Lawrence Pillers, Bill Ring, Mike Wilson, and Hacksaw Reynolds. He's also had immense success with the likes of Ray Wersching—the 35-year-old, one-time San Diego castoff who has bloomed

wheeling better performances out of the men playing for him. "We coaches forget that there are different stages in a player's career," he says. "A player may fail with one team, and that player may have an opportunity with another team and fail, but he's coming closer. By the third opportunity, he's developed his fundamental skills and his physical maturity to be able to compete and become an effective player."

"Maturation, learning, being in a different atmosphere and different conditions all are factors. You are criticized for letting a top player go, but really, it was just an early stage in his career in which you had him. The same may be true in the end [stage] of a man's career. He can become stagnant, lethargic, and disinterested with his club because everything's become routine and his performances have dropped off. Given a completely new environment, and afforded an opportunity to develop almost a new personality, a player can be reborn. Coaches who have been most successful account for this sort of thing."

JUST AS HE IS ON THE FIELD, BILL Walsh is a study in composure during an interview. His legs are crossed and relaxed, his hands making only tiny movements when he makes a point. If his sweat glands are at work, he doesn't show it. He possesses no nervous mannerisms. But his mind is elsewhere during this interview. Twice he startles his questioner by giving answers that bear no relation to what was asked. Asked, for example, to name what traditions the Walsh family keeps, he says: "We've had two grown sons and a daughter, and I think we're getting along extremely well."

At other times, particularly when asked a question that interests him, his responses are incisive. Asked whether the pressures of getting ready for yet one more push in '85 were intensified by his 1984 Super Bowl win, he responded with his best Ol' Perfessor monologue.

"I don't have any feelings that way," he says. "This season will be a challenge unique in itself, and that's one of the attractions of coaching that many highly successful men [in nonsports fields] envy. We always have exciting things happen to us. We conclude one experience and begin another one anew as a given season. So many men I know envy that kind of life. It gives life a lot of meaning because from year to year there is anticipation. That's the exciting part of coaching. Now there certainly is a downside—that's very evident."

One down side is all the time and energy Walsh took from his family en route to success. His move to San Francisco to accept his first pro head coaching job in 1979 ended 24 years of wandering from job to job. "It was tough going to three different high schools, although I think I adjusted OK," says son Craig. "When I was young, moving was difficult, but we had no choice."

Ironically, Bill Walsh's many moves as an adult paralleled his own unsettled boyhood. His father, also named Bill, lived up and down Walsh's native California coast, taking a wide variety of jobs, including stints in a brickyard, a railroad yard, and an automotive plant.

The road young Bill took led straight to the gridiron. He performed satisfactorily as a quarterback at his last high school stop, Hayward High in northern California, and started at that position for two years at the College of San Mateo. After leaving the community college, Walsh enrolled at San Jose State and vied as a walk-on for the quarterback position, losing out to a kid named Lynn Aplanalp. "I shifted Bill to end," recalls then-San Jose coach Bob Bronzan, who was impressed enough with the young man's play to offer him a scholarship. But injuries limited Walsh's playing time, and he

wound up participating in but five games his senior year.

Long since accustomed to taking gibes for his own limited abilities on the field, Walsh has no regrets that he failed to see more action in college. "It's escaped me now, so I don't give it much thought," he says. "I didn't get great satisfaction from my playing career, because of injuries and the fact I wasn't truly a great athlete."

Nonetheless, despite his lack of playing talent, Walsh's college years were far from wasted. He so impressed Bronzan that in 1956 the coach offered the newly married Walsh a graduate assistantship after Walsh completed his military service. Walsh did far more than the usual student assistant was allowed to do, coaching not only interior linemen but also the San Jose junior varsity. "Bill's title was 'graduate assistant,' for salary purposes, but actually he was an assistant," recalls Bronzan. "He was interested in new trends in football, and he wanted to be on top of them. In our planning sessions he would be asked for, or he'd volunteer, his comments. In most cases he had to be asked. He was so low-key."

After completing his course work, Walsh wrote a lengthy master's thesis titled "Defending the Spread-T Offense," at that time a revolutionary attack. "My interest initially was more related to the strategic parts of football and the areas relating to the game itself—combination of movement, action, and counteraction—the artistic end of football," says Walsh. During his research of the scholarly project, Walsh interviewed dozens of professional and college coaches, including then-Stanford coach Chuck Taylor, who wrote a foreword to the thesis. Upon completing the project some 18 months later, he sent photocopies to each person interviewed, thereby wisely cultivating contacts for future use. When it came time to interview for positions after leaving graduate school, the young man had little trouble, with Bronzan's glowing letter of recommendation in his file.

"The quote went something like this," chuckles Bronzan. "'I predict that Bill Walsh will be the outstanding football coach in the United States.' It sounds farfetched, but it happens to be true. He was impressive even back then. He was a good student, and he never stopped learning. That's the key to Bill's success—he absorbs like a sponge."

WALSH'S FIRST FULL-TIME job was a three-year stint (1957-59) at Washington Union High in Fremont, Calif. The school's three-year record before his arrival was 1-26. His first season, Walsh took his team to a 4-2-2 year, but in 1958, Washington Union won its league championship with a 9-1 mark.

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But perhaps as a premonition to Walsh's disastrous '82 season after winning Super Bowl XVI, his Washington Union Huskies plummeted to 3-6, and Walsh departed for greener pastures. "The school was split," he explains. "Of 15 lettermen, 11 were districted to a new campus, James Logan High School."

From 1960 to '63, Walsh worked as an assistant to Marv Levy at Cal-Berkeley. In '63 he moved down the peninsula to Stanford as head freshman coach. After a 3-1 season, then-coach John Ralston placed him in charge of the defensive backfield. "I was [also] John Ralston's scout my first year on the staff," he recalls, citing one game in which his Cal years came back to haunt the Golden Bears. "I scouted Cal and we beat Craig Morton's team to knock them out of the Rose Bowl, 28-17. I had recruited Craig during my years at Cal, and I was very close to that team."

Walsh's reputation in northern California was firmly established in 1966, when the old American Football League Oakland Raiders hired him as backfield coach. Under then-coach Al Davis, the Raiders were regarded much like Brigham Young is today—a pass-crazy team—and Walsh took charge of the quarterbacks.

In 1968, Walsh jumped to the AFC's Cincinnati Bengals, where his professorial attitude toward statistics, combined with his

obvious talents in developing quarterbacks (Greg Cook, Virgil Carter, and Ken Anderson) and receivers (including *five* Pro Bowlers: Eric Crabtree, Bob Trumpy, Chip Meyers, Isaac Curtis, and Charlie Joiner), earned him the sobriquet "genius," a term that has stuck to him.

"Labels are often thrown out without a lot of justification or thinking, obviously," he responds, when asked his reaction to the term. "It's almost like having a crazy nickname in sports. You don't give it much credence over a period of time."

The assistant's six years in Cincinnati were bittersweet. Bitter because, after Walsh's technical brilliance helped Bengals quarterbacks finish first in AFC passing three times—thanks to his revolutionary use of running backs as, in effect, two extra receivers—retiring Cincy head coach Paul Brown humiliated his heir apparent in 1976 by naming Bill Johnson to assume his duties. Sweet because Walsh genuinely liked working for Brown, and more important, because he learned much about his craft that later helped the 49ers breeze to two Super Bowl triumphs.

"The critical thing I developed working with Paul Brown at Cincinnati is that being decisive is really important," says Walsh. "I don't mean making a decision just to make one, or to rush through to a decision, but you

have to be willing to make one and then account for it if it doesn't work out as you anticipated. Some people don't make a decision, because there's a possibility of error, so they hide behind a strata within an organization, saying, 'It's not my job, it's his job.' Then you see a muted effort because less gets done as people go more and more by the book. One of the real lessons I learned from Paul is his willingness to decide and then his willingness to take on a miscalculation—his willingness to account for and adjust to it."

Pressed for an example, Walsh cites his own scouting mission to Clemson University to observe quarterback Steve Fuller (now with the Bears), and instead he came away enamored of an unheralded, spindly receiver whom he later signed. His name? Dwight Clark, the man whose last-second catch against Dallas in the 1981 NFC Championship Game electrified San Francisco.

Spurned by Paul Brown, Walsh went to San Diego to work as an assistant for what turned out to be yet another stay of only one season. The short tenure worked both to his and Chargers head coach Tommy Prothro's advantage. Walsh helped develop a young San Diego quarterback named Dan Fouts. And Prothro wrote his 45-year-old assistant a carefully worded reference that helped free Walsh from what looked like a lifetime apprenticeship. In 1977, Walsh assumed the

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first head coaching job he'd held since Washington High School, when Stanford beckoned him back to Palo Alto.

His two years at Stanford were marked by controversy. He launched a well-publicized tirade against Major League Baseball after Tom Brunansky—an all-CIF receiver from West Covina, Calif.—reneged on his promise to attend Stanford, after the California Angels in July 1978 paid the recruit (now batting cleanup for Minnesota) a \$90,000 bonus to sign. "I think those hard-bitten old pro baseball players couldn't care less about the chances of a young man rising in the profession and then completing his college work," Walsh grumbled at the time. "An athlete actually has the odds in his favor of making more money in his lifetime if he gets a degree from Stanford."

Walsh also went head-on against NCAA wishy-washiness and the proliferation of what he referred to as "Mickey Mouse courses" offered jocks on rival campuses, as he assailed hypocrisy in college athletics. "These football factories . . . have lost track of why the hell the talent should be on campus," he charged. "We have athletes in professional football who can't read or write with any clarity at all, who went to universities. You tell me how that happened."

Perhaps Walsh's major accomplishment was his decision to actively recruit black

students to Stanford. The coach's predecessor, Jack Christiansen, rarely offered blacks scholarships, using the school's rigid entrance requirements as an excuse not to pursue gifted athletes. Walsh, who had also pursued black athletes at Cal-Berkeley, hired two black assistants to comb the ghettos of major urban centers to find top prospects. And today, his reputation for giving minority members a fair shake well-secured, Walsh never has had a single reported instance of racial tension on the 49ers.

Walsh wasted no time in proving himself an effective college coach. His 1977 Cardinals squad went 9-3, with a Sun Bowl win; in 1978 the team's 8-4 mark included a Bluebonnet Bowl victory. Working with intelligent, dedicated players, Walsh soon introduced a complicated, diverse offense that relied on considerable risk-taking to keep opposing defenses off balance.

Simply put, Stanford fell in love with Bill Walsh. That is, until January 9, 1979, when the coach ended the love affair by signing with owner Eddie DeBartolo as the 11th head coach in 49ers history.

ALTHOUGH WALSH'S OVERALL won-lost record in the pros is unspectacular, his accomplishment of earning two Super Bowl championships and

an NFC championship appearance in six years does command respect, if not admiration, from his coaching peers. The 49ers, after all, were the most inept team in football until Walsh came along. His major challenge now is to prove that he can maintain team concentration to put two consecutive championship years together.

But should the '85 season end victoriously, don't be too surprised if Walsh either refuses to re-up for '86, or announces in advance that '86 will be his last year as coach, although he'll surely retain his current position as team president. "I think I'm becoming more and more administrative," admits Walsh. "I'm more of a teacher to the coaches and less of a teacher to the players."

The betting here is that should the 49ers and Bill Walsh repeat, he'll be content that he's left behind a dynasty for his hand-picked successor (rumored to be Illinois' Mike White) and will leave the position without regrets. He can don that old bunny mask one more time—and then hippity-hop off into the California sunset. ■

Contributing writer HANK NUWER consulted with 49ers strength coach Jerry Attaway on a diet plan. Thus far, he's lost 16 pounds and most of his hair. Hank's last I.S. piece was on BYU and quarterback Robbie Bosco.

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The NFL's Hot Corners

The league's no-bump rule has put extreme pressure on the corners, but that's the way these cocky dudes like it

By KENT PULLIAM

THERE IS A PATCH OF GREEN out there where mere mortals do not tread, a tightrope on which only the best of the best dare backpedal, for there is no safety net. It is where you place the cornerstone of defensive football.

The men who play the position carry an appropriate name: cornerback. Theirs is a position of fundamental importance in winning football. They provide the first line of defense and the last. As the National Football League playoffs get under way later this month, these men likely will be the edge that separates the good teams from the mediocre, the contenders from the pretenders.

"I don't think a team can win in the National Football League without great cornerbacks," said Mel Blount, who retired after the 1983 season, having played cornerback on Pittsburgh Steelers teams that won four Super Bowl championships. "Just look at the games last year in the playoffs. When Miami played Pittsburgh we didn't have the guys who could get up there and bump and run and hold the receivers and play man to man. That same Miami team went and played Frisco, where they have great cornerbacks, and they took those people away. The cornerback position is a very critical position. You are not going to win in this league with weak corners. You are just not going to win. I don't care who you are."

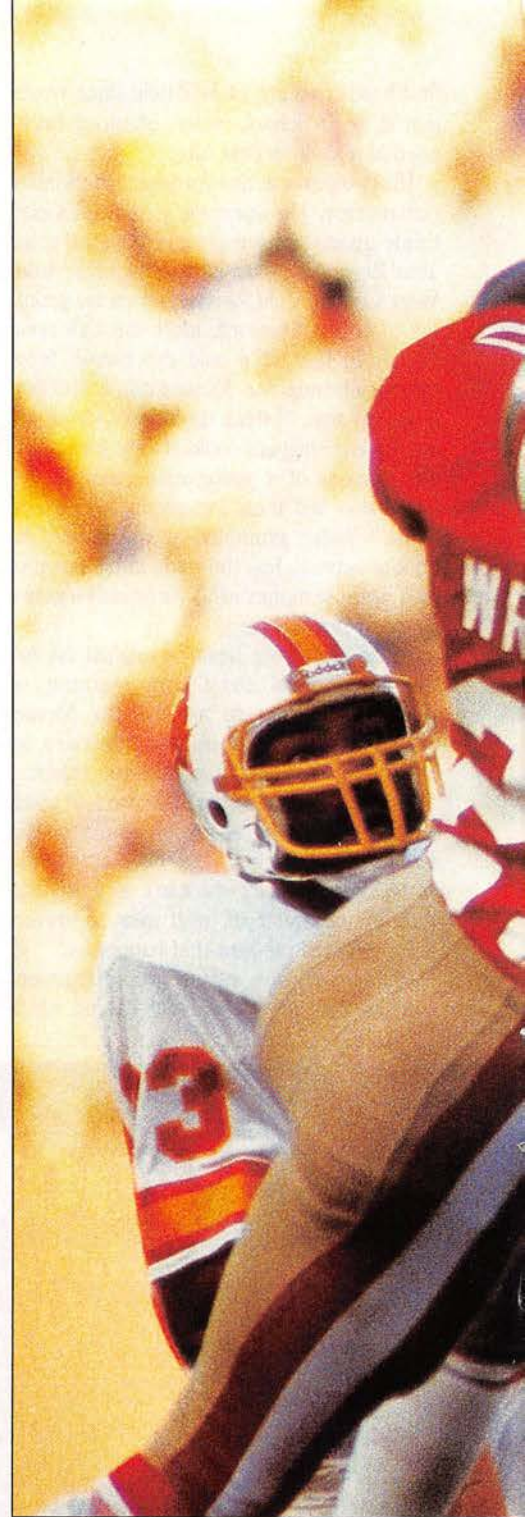
For anyone who believes Blount overstates the case because he is a cornerback himself, consider: Four of the last five Super Bowls have been won by teams with at least one outstanding cornerback. The San Francisco 49ers won Super Bowls XVI and XIX. In 1981 the 49ers captured defensive lightning in a bottle with rookie cornerbacks Ronnie Lott and Eric Wright. By their second championship last season both had earned berths in the Pro Bowl. The Los Angeles Raiders won Super Bowl XVIII largely because owner Al Davis was able to sign Mike Haynes to team with the Raiders' other Pro Bowl cornerback Lester Hayes. The Oakland Raiders won Super Bowl XV, with Hayes leading the way that season with 13 interceptions from his left cornerback spot, which he played in single coverage almost the entire season, and at a level perhaps never before witnessed.

"Today, with the way teams throw the ball, you have to be able to cover if you want to win," said Tom Flores, who coached both those Raiders Super Bowl victories. "You see a lot of throwing nowadays, and to beat that you have to have corners. When we got Mike Haynes [in 1983], he didn't allow us to make changes. He just allowed us to play our defense better. We were still playing man to man and tight coverages. But in the Super Bowl he allowed us to do it all the time."

In 1984, 21 of the 28 teams in the NFL passed the football more than they ran it. It is a trend that has become prevalent since the

rules changes in 1978 that allowed offensive linemen to use their hands in pass blocking and that restricted defensive backs from touching receivers beyond a five-yard zone past the line of scrimmage.

The Raiders and 49ers have the best pairs of cornerbacks in the NFL. Hayes and Haynes in Los Angeles have been recognized as the best in the league since they were paired in November 1983—though Hayes had some bad outings early in the season, notably against the Kansas City Chiefs, whose Carlos Carson caught five passes for 118 yards against him in a 36-20 Chiefs victory. Lott and Wright were teamed in 1981, when they were drafted by 49ers





head coach Bill Walsh. By 1984 both had become Pro Bowl players. During this season, however, Walsh moved Lott to safety, replacing him on the corner with All-Pro safety Dwight Hicks.

In Dallas, the Cowboys have Everson Walls, who in 1981 and '82 became the first player ever to lead the NFL in interceptions in each of his first two seasons. Another Haynes, Mark (no relation to Mike) of the New York Giants, played in the Pro Bowl in 1982 and '83. Not coincidentally, each of their teams has gone to the playoffs. Louis Wright of the Denver Broncos played in the Pro Bowl after the 1977-79 seasons and again in 1983, and the Broncos were in the

playoffs each of those seasons. These players are the old guard.

Washington's Darrell Green, who burst onto the scene in 1983 by running down Tony Dorsett from behind, typifies the new breed. He stands just 5'8" and weighs only 170 pounds, but makes up for his lack of height with blazing speed. Others in that second echelon include youngsters such as Hanford Dixon and Frank Minnifield of Cleveland, and Albert Lewis and Kevin Ross of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Gary Green of the Los Angeles Rams and Raymond Clayborn of New England fit into the middle somewhere. Green was a three-time Pro Bowl player in the AFC, but when

The 49ers' Wright combines the needed speed and strength.

he moved to the NFC he had to re-establish his reputation. Miami Dolphins head coach Don Shula likes his pair of Don McNeal and William Judson.

They are all descendants of the great cornerbacks of the past, and many have direct ties with the past: Hall-of-Famers Herb Adderly of the Green Bay Packers; Dick (Night Train) Lane of the Detroit Lions; Willie Brown of the Raiders, Emmitt Thomas of the Chiefs teams of the late '60s, Lemar Parrish of the Washington Redskins, and Blount. (Brown and Thomas both now

coach NFL secondaries, Brown with the Raiders, Thomas with the St. Louis Cardinals.) All great cornerbacks, past and present, have one thing in common, the swaggering walk of a hotshot fighter pilot who knows his stuff is better than anyone else's in the game.

"Cocky? No, the word is confident, maybe extremely confident, maybe superconfident," Parrish said a few years ago. "Maybe cornerbacks are cocky underneath. But they damn well better be because they aren't going to last long in this league if they aren't. You can't cover the good receivers with a choirboy mentality. This is the hardest job in the game.

"Playing defensive back today takes a much better athlete than it did 10 years ago. There are many reasons: bigger and faster receivers, more varied offenses, some super quarterbacks who aren't afraid to throw on first down. But the main reason is the no-bump rule. That changed our jobs—for the worse."

It also has changed cornerbacks somewhat. Before 1978, cornerbacks had to be big, strong people who could run with wide receivers stride for stride down the field, beating on their shoulder pads every step of the way until the quarterback released the ball. Brown and his former running mate in Oakland, Kent McCloughan, were masters of it. The intimidating style of Johnny Sample or Fred Williamson or Lem Barney has given way to the finesse of players today who have to rely as much on guile as strength.

"When I first came into the league in 1976, the rules really favored the defense," said Mike Haynes, who was a No. 1 draft choice of the New England Patriots. "You could bump receivers all over the field, as long as the ball wasn't in the air. They changed that, and it took the defensive players quite a while to make the adjustment. Now this year they have changed it again to where I think the defensive backs may have somewhat of an advantage again. I'm not really sure of that yet, but as long as we're making an attempt to look at the ball, we can have some contact with the receivers. Only time will tell if this is really going to benefit us.

"When I came into the league, the two top corners were Willie Brown and Mel Blount. These were big guys. Willie Brown was probably 215, 220. Mel Blount was probably around 210. Both were very tall and very rangy guys."

The Raiders established the standard, and in many respects maintain it. They are primarily a bump-and-run team. Others play man-to-man defense, but few ask their corners to challenge receivers the same way the Raiders do. The sit-back-and-wait zone is for teams who leave the playoff chase early.

"A cornerback has to be able to run,"

Blount said. "Once you get past speed, you have to have self-confidence. You have to be a strong-willed individual who can't be shaken by mistakes. It is a very delicate position. You are out there on an island. You can't afford to fall off the cliff. You've got to

'The only thing between me and six points is my mistakes and green grass.'

be 99% right all the time. That one percent will end up in a touchdown, so you have to be pretty consistent.

"The man who plays the corner has to be a tremendous athlete. He can't be just an average ballplayer."

THE IDEAL CORNER HAS NOT changed over the years. Teams still prefer players like Brown or Emmitt Thomas at cornerback. Les Miller, the director of player personnel for the Kansas City Chiefs, points out that there are exceptions to every rule in the league—but the ideal is the same.

"You would like for them to be somewhere around six feet, and somewhere around 185 pounds," Miller said. "That's what you always wanted them to be. Everybody is playing so many different types of coverages now, that a team can probably get by. Size is still a consideration, though, perhaps even more than it has been in the past. Your corners come up and run support a lot, so you need to be careful if you are going with an undersize player. He could be undersize in height, not in strength or weight.

"If a corner is going to play 60 or 70 downs a game, he is going to have to support the run. And since they can bump in just that five-yard zone, he has to be big enough to bump there and not get knocked off his man. He has to have great strength so that he can have impact on the receiver. You can't have a weak 5'11", 175-pound guy, or he is going to get killed. But the big guys also have to have great footwork, and great acceleration off the turn."

Shula says the game has come full cycle and the big corners are needed even more today than before. More strength is needed now because of the bump rule. And even though the receivers in the league can be smaller, like his Mark Clayton and Mark Duper, the preferred cornerbacks are still the same as they were 10 years ago.

"The way you have to play the game now, you have to get right up in people's face," Shula said. "You have to be able to run with them and make plays. You are going to get beat some, but you also are going to make some plays. When the rules were changed and all the bumping had to be done in that five-yard zone, what you had to do was get guys who would be big and strong enough to bump receivers in that five-yard area, but could still run when the receivers went downfield.

"That's what you are seeing today. You are seeing these great, great athletes on defense, the same as these great athletes they're covering on offense. They are the two best athletes on the field, the corners and the wide receivers."

The success of the Pittsburgh Steelers during the mid-'70s led most in the NFL to look for physical corners. Blount was 6'3" and weighed 210 pounds. He was a bear in supporting the run, and he could cover. The Steelers' other corners, J. T. Thomas (6'2", 196) and Ron Johnson (5'10", 200) fit the pattern of strongmen, yet all could play good man-to-man defense.

"You can take a big man who has the same ability the little man has, and which man would you prefer?" Blount asks. "What has happened is that it's hard to find cornerbacks who are 6'3" and good enough to play out there. I don't think the rule changes have meant that coaches are looking for smaller defensive backs. But they just can't find bigger ones.

"The rules changes have changed the game, but it hasn't changed what a cornerback should be. I think that I opened a lot of people's eyes. A lot of people did look for players who fit my physical attributes."

The Steelers did just that, and for years had the corner on NFL championships, winning four Super Bowl titles. But their preference for big cornerbacks evolved over a period of time and is still evolving.

"The standards you use to judge them keep changing," said Art Rooney Jr., vice president of player personnel for the Steelers. "When Bill Austin was here, he wanted guys who could mirror the receiver down the field and up into the stands if they had to. When Chuck [Noll] came in, he wanted big, strong guys who could come up and support the run. Now he [Noll] wants guys with vision, with great awareness, guys who can break on the ball."

The Raiders define it with one word: toughness. Owner Al Davis won't say exactly what a Raiders cornerback is, but looking at Haynes and Hayes one gets the idea. Davis especially liked Hayes' aggressive style, which earned the cornerback the reputation as the premier bump-and-run player in the league.

"I don't know what other teams look for," Flores said. "I know we look at toughness. They have to be tough and very aggressive—tenacious. That's the name of the game. Over the years we have developed pretty good hitters, and that's why we like big defensive backs if we can find them. They can be more physical. But it's tough to find a big back who can cover. Most of the backs who can play man coverage well are little backs or lightweight backs."

Both Hayes and Haynes are big backs. Hayes stands in at 6'0", 200. Haynes is 6'2", 190. But just as important is the mental toughness exhibited by the little guys. Green of the Redskins has world-class sprinter's speed. Walls, at Dallas, does not have world-class speed, but he is so instinctive that he seems to have a knack for knowing exactly where the receiver is going to make his break and where the ball will be thrown.

"You are always looking for cornerbacks who are tall and strong," said Chiefs coach John Mackovic, who has Lewis (6'2", 190) and Ross (5'9", 182). "You don't always have that luxury. There are excellent players in the league who aren't the tallest players but who still play the ball very well and play aggressively. There might be a premium put on some bump-and-run type players because they will have some advantages."

Nearly all cornerbacks have that built-in clock. It is the instinctive timing that allows Walls to break on the ball without the blazing speed. It is the mechanism that makes good corners look for the ball at the right time, while others appear to be lost when the receiver makes his over-the-shoulder grab on a fade-away route. But all the good corners have the mental toughness to rebound after the inevitable touchdown that goes over their head.

"It's all in how you handle getting beat, because you are going to get beat," said Gary Green of the Rams. "You have to forget it when it's over. A lot of guys won't make it very long in this league, because they think for a quarter about a play in which they got beat. They're playing one down and thinking about what happened four downs ago. You have to come back and be just as mentally prepared for the next down as you were for the one you got burned on, because the only thing between me and six points is my mistakes and green grass."

"I have a little timepiece in my mind when I'm covering a guy, where I'm thinking the quarterback ought to be releasing the ball just at this precise time or he is going to be sacked."

While cornerbacks may be the cornerstone for a good defense, they certainly

aren't the end-all answer. When the Miami Dolphins were winning consecutive Super Bowls in the early 1970s, they didn't have great cornerbacks. But football of the 1970s was significantly different from the game today.

Emmitt Thomas points out that the defense rests on the shoulders of the cornerbacks today.

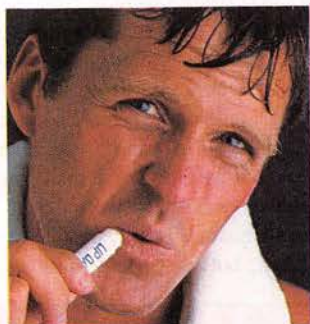
"As you know, most games are not going to be decided by runs," he said. "They're decided on passes, and the pressure is on the defensive backs."

Which brings the problem full circle. Teams without a solid cornerstone for the defense won't win. Solid, in the vernacular of cornerbacks, means being able to play man-to-man defense. And the best teams have players who can do that.

"If a team doesn't have some people who can play man for man," Blount said, "they might as well forget it."

And Miller: "Maybe defense doesn't start at the corners, but it sure helps if you have them." ■

KENT PULLIAM has no special desire to be stuck out on the corner, saying he has enough trouble going one-on-one with his typewriter. His last I.S. piece was the 1985 American Football Conference predictions.



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Invisible Stars

By JIM SMITH

DOWN THE STRETCH OF THE 1984 National Football League season, the names that dominated the headlines were Dan Marino, Joe Montana, Eric Dickerson, and Walter Payton. They also can be expected to rise to the occasion this year. The stars usually do.

There are other NFL superstars who need no introductions. Their national identities are also established: Tony Dorsett, Randy White, Lawrence Taylor, Marcus Allen, Mark Gastineau, Joe Theismann, John Riggins, Ozzie Newsome, Lester Hayes, Dan Fouts, and Ronnie Lott. Television viewers have no problem spotting them on Sundays.

But there is another category of player that bears watching in the last month of the season. These are players who for one reason or another have been overlooked by the national media. In some cases, injuries prevented them from reaching their potential. In other instances, superstar teammates keep them from receiving the recognition they deserve. Several play in small markets. But they are part of the backbone of their teams. Here is one man's look at eight of the NFL's unsung clutch players:

1. MIKE MERRIWEATHER, 25, 6'2", 215, outside linebacker, Pittsburgh Steelers.

In a University of the Pacific alumni game after his first pro season, Merriweather fulfilled a fantasy of his. He played wide receiver and running back. With his build, it's hard to visualize Merriweather as a linebacker, especially with the Steel Curtain defense.

Merriweather was a No. 3 draft pick in 1982. He played on special teams as a rookie behind Jack Ham and tried to learn the defense.

"It was mind-boggling for me," he said. "I was just running around not knowing what was going on behind me. I didn't know the names of the routes, the names of the formations. The coaching staff just bided their time and taught me everything. I'm grateful for that."



Merriweather has put steel back in Pittsburgh's defense.

After Ham retired, Merriweather stepped in and was second to Jack Lambert in tackles in 1983. Last year he blossomed into one of the best outside linebackers in the NFL. He led the team with 98 tackles and was third in the AFC in sacks with a club-record 15. Only Mark Gastineau and Andre Tippett had more.

Steelers defensive coordinator Jed Hughes says Merriweather has "blocker acceleration—getting back to top speed after beating a blocker. Mike is just uncanny at that."

Since Merriweather is a product of the dreary streets of Vallejo, north of Oakland, he entered pro football wide-eyed. "He's not spoiled like so many athletes who have always been stars," Hughes said. "He never complains. He studies so hard and does everything you tell him, and it's just because he wants to play. It's really refreshing."

Pittsburgh dropped its traditional 4-3 defense in 1981, switching to the 3-4, which is ideal for a rushing linebacker. "Contact is not my favorite part of the game," Merriweather said. He prefers going for interceptions, making big plays, running around the blocks.

The Steelers' overachiever made his first Pro Bowl last season, when his team made it

to the AFC title game against Miami. Look for him to be there again this year.

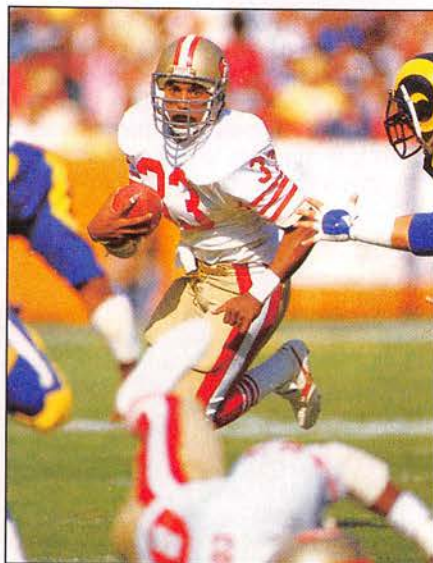
2. ROGER CRAIG, 25, 6'0", 222, running back, San Francisco 49ers.

This all-purpose back was relatively unknown until he set a Super Bowl record with three touchdowns in Palo Alto in the 49ers' 38-16 victory over Miami. As his running mate Wendell Tyler fades, Craig might develop into a James Wilder-type contributor.

"Roger has made a major impact on our team," Walsh said. "He's one of the most versatile backs in football. He's an excellent blocker and probably the best receiving back in the league."

Craig played on Nebraska teams that went 10-2, 9-3, and 10-2. He followed a brother, Curtis, who was a local hero in Davenport, Iowa, and a Cornhuskers wingback for three years. "It was tough for me growing up," Craig said, "because everybody was always asking me, 'Are you going to be like your older brother?' I didn't like it, but I set goals for myself to be better than he was at my age. It worked out well for me. It made me a better person and a better athlete."

Craig was a Heisman Trophy candidate as a junior tailback, but was asked to move to



Craig is double trouble because he can run and catch.

With the crunch of the NFL playoffs near, let us introduce you to eight clutch players you might not know well, but they will decide who wins and who loses

fullback in his senior year to make room for Mike Rozier. "He didn't question it," 49ers receivers/quarterback coach Paul Hackett said. "He went to work and gave it his all."

A No. 2 draft pick in 1983, Craig accounted for 1,152 yards rushing and receiving as a rookie and 1,324 yards last season when he led the 49ers with 71 catches. He had only 16 receptions at Nebraska.

"Before I came here," Craig said, "I knew they would be throwing the ball more, so I tried to prepare myself mentally and physically. I tried to catch between 75 and 100 balls a day from anyone who would throw to me. I'm happy I can block for a back the caliber of Wendell [Tyler]. I enjoy being in the same backfield because I have learned so much from him, as far as exploding through the line, reading my blocks. . . ."

Down the stretch this year, when the 49ers are vying for a playoff spot, quarterback Joe Montana will dump off to Craig whenever he feels the pass-rush heat. Watch Craig's shifty feet enable him to dodge open-field tackles. He also possesses an uncanny nose for the endzone. Craig tallied 12 touchdowns in his rookie season, 10 in '84, and had already scored eight times in his first five games in '85.

3. STEVE LARGENT, 31, 5'11", 184, wide receiver, Seattle Seahawks.

Nobody in the NFL caught more passes from 1976 to '84 than the 545 Largent caught. For a decade, opponents have been trying to figure out how he does it. Largent is not big, not fast, and rarely goes deep. But he runs disciplined routes, concentrates, and catches most passes he touches.

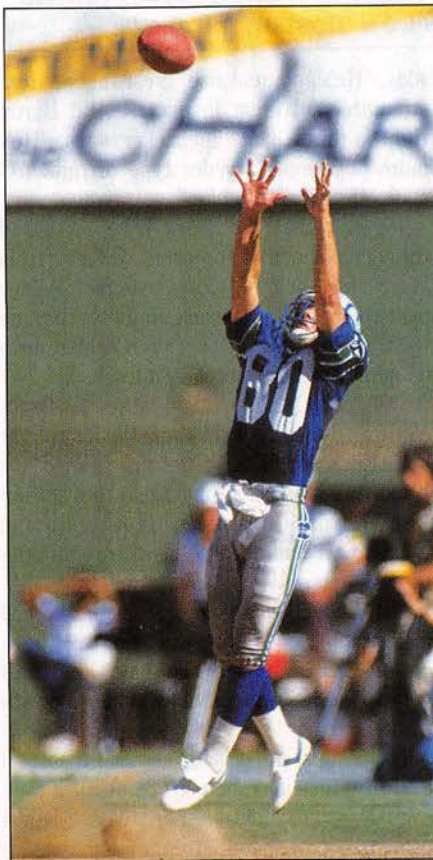
"That's about what every article on me says," Largent said. "I convince myself that I'm probably gonna get hit whether or not I catch the ball, so I might as well catch it."

Largent led the nation in touchdown catches at Tulsa in 1974 and '75, with 14 each year, and was a No. 4 Houston Oilers draft pick. He came to Seattle in a trade (for an eighth-round draft pick) before his rookie season and was reunited with his college coach, Jerry Rhome, the Seahawks' offensive coordinator.

"That helped me here initially," Largent

said, "because I was able to adapt to the Seahawks system very quickly. It was very similar to what we were doing at Tulsa."

Largent thrived catching passes from Jim Zorn and his successor, Dave Krieg. When Chuck Knox replaced Jack Patera as coach in



It's amazing how Largent keeps stretching his potential.

1983 and brought a more run-oriented philosophy, Largent's production did not suffer. His 12 TD catches in 1984 were a career high. Largent has benefited from the emergence of fleet Daryl Turner as a deep threat. Turner caught 15 scoring passes in his first 18 games as a pro. But Largent never has had trouble getting open.

"I think the fact of my [slow] speed has been overplayed," Largent said. "If you took all the receivers in the league and ran 'em 40 yards, there wouldn't be more than five yards difference between 'em. There aren't many times you run 40 yards down the field."

Look for Krieg to make Largent his third-down receiver in the last month of the season as the Seahawks contend for a playoff berth. "I've been in a position to obtain individual recognition and honors," Largent said, "but all of my goals are team-oriented. Individual honors aren't very rewarding unless you're winning."

4. DAVE BUTZ, 35, 6'7", 295, defensive tackle, Washington Redskins.

He is gentle off the field, but on it, Butz is one of the best run-stopping defensive linemen in the NFL. He's about as easy to budge as a cast-iron furnace. His career got off to a mediocre start in St. Louis but picked up when he was surrounded by better players in Washington.

After 11 years of perseverance, Butz finally made the Pro Bowl following the 1983 season, when the Redskins went to their second straight Super Bowl. "I think I've had good seasons all along," Butz said. "My job is to plug the middle and I've done that well the last couple of years."

Butz led the Redskins with 11½ sacks in 1983 and made 69 tackles. He dropped to 4½ and 72 in 1984, but he helped the Redskins defense to a club-record 66 sacks and a No. 2 ranking in the league against the run. Teams rarely can afford *not* to double-team him. Butz is at his best on third-and-short or in a goal-line situation. Watch him stand running backs up and drive them back. Butz is the main reason the Redskins are always a tough team to run the ball against.

A nephew of former agriculture secretary Earl Butz, the defensive tackle carves duck decoys as a hobby, does a lot of charity work, and is learning the banking business. The former Purdue All-American was the Cardinals' No. 1 pick in 1973 and came to Washington in a trade in 1975, with the task of breaking into George Allen's "Over the Hill Gang." It took awhile. But Butz did it and has survived.

"He's always played great against the run," Redskins defensive line coach LaVern [Torgy] Torgeson says of Butz. [In 1983] he was great against the pass. We allowed him to do a few things to make him more effective."

Butz feels coach Joe Gibbs is more imaginative that Allen was, in that "we do something different from the same formation week to week." Above all, Butz prides himself on his durability and intensity. "I play every down in every game," he said. Running backs, beware.

5. **FREEMAN McNEIL**, 26, 5'11", 212, running back, New York Jets. Early this season, McNeil shattered Matt Snell's 16-year-old club rushing record by gaining 192 yards in a game against Buffalo. When he is healthy, he is the Jets' most important player and one of the finest backs in the league.

McNeil was a Pro Bowl starter last year after he rebounded from a separated shoulder that cost him seven games in 1983. He had the first 1,000-yard season of his career, despite missing four games, including the final two.

When the NFL's top running backs are discussed, do you ever hear McNeil's name mentioned? No. It's always Dickerson and Payton. The fact the Jets have gone 7-9 the last two years has not helped McNeil attract national recognition. But the Jets, a dark-horse contender now, know how valuable he is. "He's our meal ticket," tackle Marvin Powell said. "He's like a floating mirage out there."

McNeil was a power fullback at UCLA, where he was an All-American and the Jets' No. 1 choice in the 1981 draft. He was the team MVP in 1982, when the Jets got to within a game of the Super Bowl. McNeil rushed for a team record 211 yards in the Jets' 44-17 playoff victory at Cincinnati.

He never has played a complete season. But if he is able to this year, the Jets could be a playoff threat. "It's been a challenge to see what I could do with the injuries [I've had]," McNeil said. "Because of the injuries I couldn't do certain things." Like run over people.

"I'd rather be seen than heard," he said. "I'd like people to know I can do something rather than talk a good game. When you talk, things don't always turn out that way. I have the heart to go out and play. It gets hard sometimes, but I feel I'm a professional. I'm lucky even to get a job like this. There's not too many men my age who make the type of money I make. I can make the sacrifice. That's why I can go out there and play, hurt or not. It means a lot to me."

Watch McNeil cut back against the grain and slide through tackles in traffic.

6. **JAMES WILDER**, 27, 6'3", 225, running back, Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Giants linebacker Lawrence Taylor says Wilder is "the best all-around running back I've ever played against." Harry Carson



The Jets' McNeil moves upfield like a 'floating mirage.'

adds, "He's got great size, great speed, great strength, and great instincts." And Byron Hunt, a third Giants linebacker, says, "He's more of an open, wilder type of runner. I guess the name fits him."

It's just that the Bucs have struggled through 2-14 and 6-10 seasons (0-5 start this year) since John McKay switched Wilder from fullback to tailback midway through 1983, so the nation has not seen Wilder much on national television. That's too bad.

His 2,229 yards in 1984 were the third-highest total in NFL history. Wilder caught 85 passes for 685 yards and rushed for 1,544. He started strong again this season with 279 rushing yards and 14 receptions in two games, and became his team's all-time rushing leader.

"James Wilder is going to handle the ball many, many times this year," the Bucs' new coach Leeman Bennett said, "and I know he's going to suffer some fumbles. I can live with that."

Fumbling aside, Wilder should be able to lead the Bucs into the playoffs soon, if they can only repair their defense. "My style is a combination of speed, strength, and maneuvering," Wilder said. "I'd say I try to read the defense and go in the opposite direction. Playing in the I [formation] I've got the advantage. I can read the defense before it can adjust."

"He's the most bruising runner I've ever been around," said former Bucs guard Steve Courson, who has blocked for Franco Harris. "He's a slashing runner who goes north-south, never east-west. You know he'll hit the hole hard, there'll be no monkeying around."

"People ask me about carrying [a lot] all the time," Wilder said, "but actually it seems to be getting easier. The line is getting me in the secondary more and I'm not getting hit by as many big defensive linemen."

7. **JIM COLLINS**, 27, 6'2", 230, inside linebacker, Los Angeles Rams.

Collins is a tough, old-fashioned, run-stopping linebacker who has worked hard to improve his pass coverage. He's intelligent, reads plays well, does not get taken off his feet easily, and is a sure tackler. Everybody knows the Rams offense relies on Dickerson. The defense, which shined in the early part of '85, revolves around Collins.

In 1984 the Syracuse alum finally had an injury-free season and was in on a whopping 186 tackles, 55 more than No. 2 Carl Ekern! He also broke up 10 pass plays, which was fourth on the team. "I'll tell you," Rams defensive coordinator Fritz Shurmur said, "he has become a really good player. He's got such good instincts and that's why he makes so many tackles."

"I key the guard," Collins said of his style. "Once I react to him and take my first step, I zero in on the ball-carrier. I don't even notice



Opponents have learned it takes two hands to handle a Wilder.

anybody else, the blockers or anything. Our defense is basic. We're not fancy at all. Our key is just keeping it simple. We don't try to outsmart anybody."

Built like Popeye, Collins never has worried about his strength. It's his knees and shoulders that have given him trouble. He was drafted in the second round in 1981 as the heir to Jack Reynolds. He's been much better than Reynolds was at defending against the underneath passes. Watch him pop the tight end on third-and-6 over the middle.

"Normally on passing downs," Shurmur said, "you want a linebacker who is 215 and has 4.6 speed. Jimmy's not only fast enough but he's a big, strong guy who can give you a hard hit should they decide to run."

Harry Carson thought Collins deserved a trip to the Pro Bowl last season instead of Carson. But, as Rams coach John Robinson said, "Jim Collins' Pro Bowl for this year will be next year. It's like your income-tax return. It comes late."

8. PAUL COFFMAN, 29, 6'3", 225, tight end, Green Bay Packers.

Since this former free agent became a starter in 1979, he has run even (35-35 early this year) in catching touchdown passes with the Packers' more-publicized wide receiver James Lofton. But who ever hears about Paul Coffman?

He had to plead with NFL scouts testing his Kansas State roommate, Gary Spani, to give him a tryout. Since signing with Green Bay, Coffman has become semibionic, working out on his own each summer with former K-State teammates in Manhattan, Kan.

Stretching exercises. Agility drills. Jumping rope. Dashes. Running pass patterns. Lifting weights. Distance running. Coffman reports each year in great shape and stays that way.

"I knew I had to do something to stick out," Coffman said of his first training camp. "I was only 212, 215 pounds. I figured if I came to camp in excellent shape and I could go 100% every play, I'd have a better chance to make the team."

After he did, Coffman kept his offseason ritual going out of fear of losing his job. "I've enjoyed the success I've had," he said, "and the only way to keep that success is to keep working hard every year."

Early this season, Coffman's career totals were 278 catches for 3,609 yards, most of the catches coming underneath the coverage after Lofton cleared out deep. Coffman runs precise routes and can take a hit, outrun linebackers, and run over defensive backs. He has made the last three Pro Bowls.

"James and I complement each other," Coffman said. "You can't take two of us out of the game without the other guy getting open. With my quickness and by studying the game, I know where people will be, so it helps me get open in the seams."

His fitness enables Coffman to survive the arduous 16-game NFL season. "It really helps my confidence," he said, "knowing that maybe the guys across from me aren't doing as much as I've been. Toward the end of the games, it's going to catch up with them. That's when I'm going to kick into gear. I rely more on moves and quickness than speed. I have to put a shake on safeties and linebackers, but if I get a clean release at the line, I'm going to get open." ■

Contributing writer JIM SMITH writes his best at playoff time. His last piece for I.S. was on the Giants' Phil Simms.

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N TODAY

Oklahoma's Family Of Champions

When Tony Casillas put on the Sooner uniform for coach Barry Switzer, Oklahoma tradition made him a winner—he had no choice

BUD WILKINSON THREW DOWN the challenge around 1950, and it is still being answered by the Oklahoma Sooners almost four decades later.

Oklahomans complained that Wilkinson was too young to be the head coach of their Sooners when he took over in 1947 at the age of 31. But he silenced the skeptics by coaching Oklahoma to a 7-2-1 record in his first season, a 10-1 mark in 1948, and an 11-0 mark in 1949—taking the Sooners to the brink of national prominence in a sport long dominated by Notre Dame, Army, Minnesota, and Michigan. Wilkinson realized how close he was and wanted to seal his pact with destiny.

So the tall, slender Minnesotan commissioned a wooden sign to be made, and then hung it above the door leading from the Oklahoma locker room to the playing field. It was a white sign with a red border and a red message: "Play like a CHAMPION today." The challenge to the young men wearing the crimson and cream of the University of Oklahoma was direct and unavoidable. They'd see the sign as they left the locker room every day for practice, every Saturday for games. It was almost a dare—a dare to each player to be something he had never been before.

"The repetition was what was important," Wilkinson recalls. "You saw it day after day. We were trying to establish a feeling of

morale, of confidence, of challenge. Most people do what is required and not much more. That's not a champion. 'Champion' has its own connotation. A champion takes it upon himself to do more than what he is asked. There are a lot of also-rans, but there are very few champions. That was the idea we were trying to convey."

All-Americans like Jim Weatherall, Leon Heath, Frankie Anderson, and Buddy Jones began answering Wilkinson's challenge in 1950. They did more that year than they had ever been asked. Oklahoma went 10-1 to win its first-ever national championship—and football at the school hasn't been the same since.

Sure, the coaches have changed: Wilkinson was replaced by Gomer Jones, who was replaced by Jim Mackenzie, who was replaced by Chuck Fairbanks, who was replaced by Barry Switzer. The stadium has changed: They have expanded the seating at Owen Field to 75,000 and replaced the natural grass with an artificial turf. They also have built new offices for the football brain-trust and new locker facilities for the players. But the tradition, the winning, and, oh yes, the wooden sign remain.

"Play like a CHAMPION today" still hangs above the heads of the Sooners when they burst through the locker-room doors for that charge down the ramp onto Owen Field to defend the honor of Oklahoma football. And

By Rick Gosselin

now the players acknowledge that they will play like champions on that day. As the players surge through the double doors—the captains, then seniors, then juniors, then sophomores, then freshmen—every one raises an arm and taps the sign as he passes underneath it.

"We expect to do what the sign says—play like a champion," says George Cumby, an All-America linebacker at Oklahoma in 1979 and a No. 1 draft pick of the Green Bay Packers in 1980. "When you hit that sign, you let everyone know that you personally will do your best to help the team win. It's some-

Oklahoma's current coach Switzer. "The players don't have to be told. They recognize what it means. The older hands lead them out and they all join in."

"It's part of Oklahoma football," adds Steve Davis, who quarterbacked the Sooners from 1973 to '75 and is now a television commentator on college football games. "When you're born, you recognize your momma. When you put on the Oklahoma uniform, you recognize that you'd better hit the sign."

So soaked in Oklahoma tradition has the sign become that the Sooners have a smaller

OKLAHOMA HAS LONG GONE after it. The Sooners have been crowned national champion five times since 1950, winning back-to-back titles in 1955-56 and 1974-75. Alabama and Southern Cal are the only other schools to have won as many national titles during that span. The Sooners have won or shared 22 conference championships since 1950 and have gone to 15 New Year's Day bowl games. This is a school that takes its football seriously. At times, too seriously.

"The frustration I had as a player was that the people put unrealistic expectations on us," Davis says. "They don't understand that because of the scholarship limitations now, the dominant schools of the '60s and '70s are not as dominant anymore. College football has achieved parity, but the people still have the '50s and '60s mentality. They expect you to go dominate teams, score half-a-hundred points, and be above the majority of teams playing college football. I'll never forget how, when I was at Oklahoma, I played in 33 games and lost once—we were 31-1-1—and I was booed in the one game I lost. It was to Kansas in 1975—at about 3:45 in the afternoon. Memories like that stick with you."

Davis is not the only Sooner ever held accountable for losing. Switzer took over as head coach in 1973 and did not lose a game until his third season. He guided Oklahoma to those back-to-back national titles in 1974-75 and did not lose more than two games in any of his first eight seasons. Then came a string of three-, four-loss seasons from 1981 through '83, and even though Switzer had the highest winning percentage of any coach in America, frustrated fans were calling for his ouster.

"Here's Switzer, the winningest coach in college football," Davis says, "and when he went through a 7-4 season, people wanted his job. How do you fire, or even consider turning loose, the winningest coach in college football? But that kind of thing went on here at Oklahoma. It was ludicrous—and it shows how much the fans don't know. Any team in the country would be satisfied with what Oklahoma has accomplished through the years."

Switzer had coached Oklahoma to a Top 10 finish in each of his first eight seasons before enduring that 7-4-1 record in 1981. Forget that three of the losses were to Southern Cal, Texas, and Nebraska, and that it would seem he redeemed himself with a 40-14 annihilation of Houston in the Sun Bowl. He finished 8-4 in 1982, with three of his losses to Southern Cal, Nebraska, and Arizona State in the Fiesta Bowl. He finished 8-4 again in 1983, with three of his losses to Ohio State, Texas, and Nebraska in a season scrambled by the Marcus Dupree fiasco.



Sooner pride helps Casillas fight through double-teams.

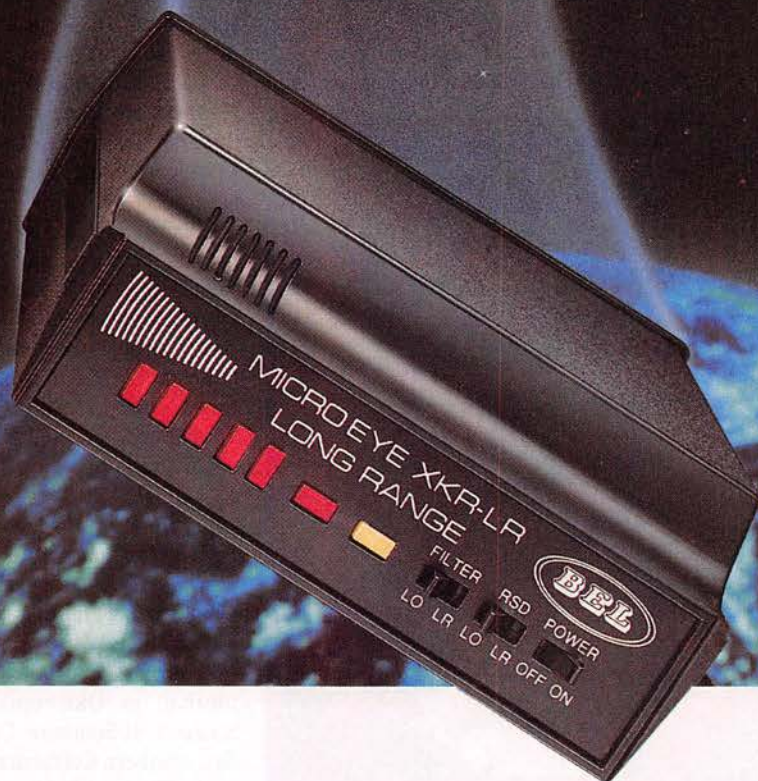
thing that everybody did. It's tradition. When I hit the sign, that meant I was going to do my best. If I felt I wasn't or couldn't give my best for whatever the reason, I wouldn't hit the sign."

No one told Cumby to reach up and tap the sign, just as no one told Heisman Trophy winners Steve Owens or Billy Sims, and no one told All-Americans such as Steve Zabel, Greg Pruitt, Lee Roy Selmon, or Tony Casillas during their respective eras at Oklahoma. It has become an unspoken ritual, as common a game-day gesture as putting on one's helmet.

"I've never said a word about it," says

version they take on the road. It's about the size of a street sign, and the equipment manager hangs it above the locker-room door at whatever stadium the Sooners happen to be playing—conference or non-conference. Sort of a portable tradition.

"If we went to Lincoln, Neb., or Dallas, Texas," Davis says, "we knew the sign was going to be there with us. It's your reminder that you represent the University of Oklahoma, which is recognized nationally as a winner in college football. It's a frame of mind the coaches and university want to instill in their student-athletes. You're a champion—go after it."



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That three-season stretch defined for Switzer the limits of patience of Oklahoma football fans.

"Bud Wilkinson gave birth to the monster here. All I'm trying to do is continue feeding it. He's the one who spoiled them with all those great teams of his. His record is unbelievable. He won those 47 games in a row (1953-57), and he won 13 straight league championships. We had a trainer named Ken Rawlinson, who put his son in first grade here in Norman when Bud first took over, and that young man did not see Oklahoma lose a league game until his freshman year

what Oklahoma was all about—why do they win? What is different there? What intangibles do they have that other schools don't? Some of it is the caliber of athlete and some of it is the pride. They just think they are better than anybody they play.

"In my first week at Oklahoma I sat down and talked to some of the players. They had won eight games the year before, and I asked them how many they felt they could win the upcoming season. I was amazed—to a man, they said they felt they could win all the games. They said, 'This will be a tough game,' and 'That will be a tough game,' and

at a place where you have the best chance of winning, and at Oklahoma they have a terrific chance of winning every time they go out. I've been on some good roads in coaching—but Oklahoma is the superhighway."

Merv Johnson was also in a coaching comfort zone. He was the assistant head coach and offensive coordinator under Dan Devine at Notre Dame when the Fighting Irish won the national championship in 1977. The Irish followed that up with a No. 6 ranking in 1978. Johnson was an integral cog in a program with perhaps the deepest roots of success in all of college football. Yet, when the Sooners came calling in 1979 with an offer for Johnson to be Switzer's assistant head coach and offensive line coach, he accepted.

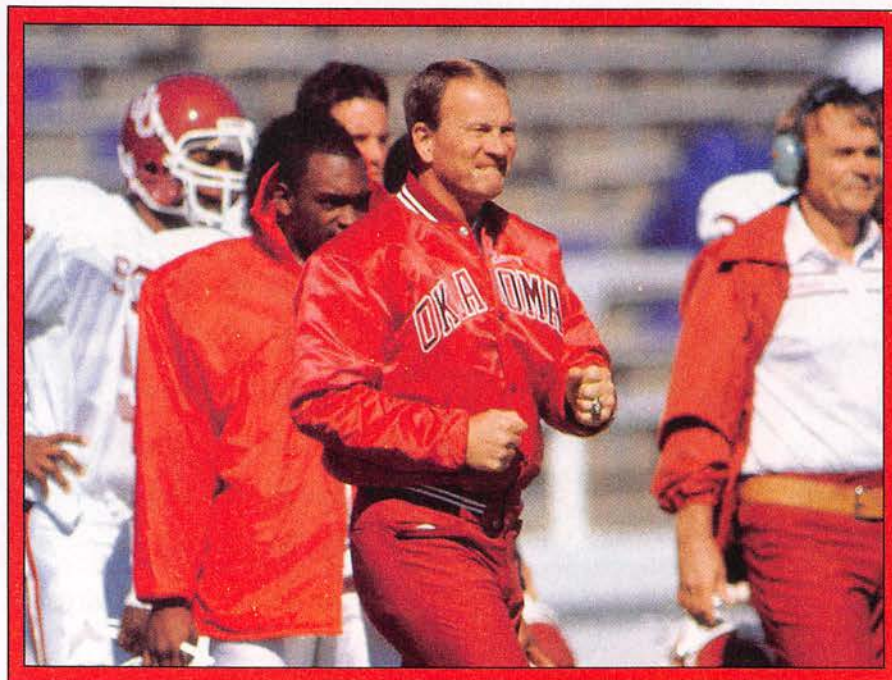
"Barry Switzer and I had been close friends for a long time," Johnson explains, "and I had all the respect in the world for the Oklahoma program. I had played [at Missouri] against their national championship teams in the 1950s when they were bullet-proof. Their excellence was already etched in my mind. I looked at it as a tremendous opportunity."

PART OF OKLAHOMA'S FASCINATION with the Sooners is that, unlike perennial powers Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State, Southern Cal, and Texas, there is no competition in the state from professional football. When people talk football in Oklahoma, they're talking Sooners. If Southern Cal loses on a Saturday, southern Californians can look forward to the Rams or Raiders winning on Sunday. But when the Sooners lose, the world stops for a week. Life in that fishbowl is another form of seduction that Oklahoma football exerts.

Keith Jackson was one of the top prep tight ends in the nation in 1983. He was recruited by Texas, Mississippi, his home-state Arkansas Razorbacks, and, because he had aspirations to play professional football one day, Jackson also considered pass-oriented schools such as southern powers Florida and Miami. But even though Oklahoma did not throw the football, Jackson was intrigued by that life in the fishbowl.

"I looked at their record before I went down there on my recruiting visit," Jackson says. "People were really mad at them for being 8-4, and it kind of shocked me. At Arkansas, 8-4 was a good season. But at Oklahoma, it's a terrible season. A team like that wants to win and always will win. That's why people expect so much from them—when you start giving candy to a baby, he's going to want more candy."

Surviving that pressure has its rewards. Oklahoma has had 41 consensus All-Americans since 1950, three Heisman Trophy win-



Switzer: 'Bud Wilkinson created a monster. I'm just feeding it.'

here—that's 13 years without losing in the conference! Oklahoma represents champions. That's history. That's fact. It happened last year and it will happen in the future."

THE INSATIABLE APPETITE for success of Oklahoma's fans, coaches, and players is the engine that powers the school's tradition. It is the magnet that continues to attract quality contributors to the program. Mack Brown certainly didn't need the University of Oklahoma. His future had already been mapped out: He was the head coach at Appalachian State by the time he was 31 years old. Two or three winning seasons there would have put Brown in line for a head job at an NCAA Division I school by the time he was 35. But he left Appalachian State after one season to become the offensive coordinator at Oklahoma in 1984.

"At the time, I was 32 years old and I felt I still had so many things to learn in this business," Brown says. "So I went to see

"These we'll just win.' It's a matter of confidence when you show up at the University of Oklahoma. It sure makes it easier to coach."

Jim Donnan didn't need Oklahoma, either. He had built a reputation as a quarterback-maker, having developed passers such as Gary Huff at Florida State, Matt Kupec at North Carolina, Darrell Dickey at Kansas State, and Marlon Adler at Missouri while serving as an assistant coach at those schools. You wouldn't expect him to be approached for, nor would he have any apparent reason to accept, the position of offensive coordinator at a school so totally committed to the run and oblivious to the pass as Oklahoma. But when Brown left to become the head coach at Tulane last winter, Switzer hired Donnan away from Missouri.

"The attraction for me was being a coordinator in a program with such a great winning tradition," Donnan says. "You don't worry about the systems; you worry about winning. Coaching is coaching. It's all teaching. It all comes down to blocking and tackling—not philosophies. Everyone wants to coach

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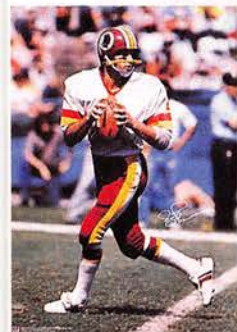
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ners, and four Outland Trophy winners. Only Notre Dame has had as many All-Americans (41), only Ohio State has had more Heisman winners (4), and only Nebraska has had more Outland winners (5) than Oklahoma. The rewards also come at the National Football League draft table. Since 1950, 26 Sooners have been selected in the first round of NFL drafts, with Selmon the first player chosen in the 1976 draft and Sims the first to go in the 1980 draft. Sims, in fact, was one of eight players from the 1977 Oklahoma offensive backfield who went on to play in the NFL (also Elvis Peacock, David Overstreet, Kenny King, Thomas Lott, Freddie Nixon, Jimmy Rogers, and Vickey Ray Anderson).

An athlete knows that when he commits to play his college football at Oklahoma, there's a good chance he will be able to continue his career as a professional four or five years down the road. That's another of the reasons Oklahoma has been able to recruit nationally—pulling a Buster Rhymes out of Miami, a Steve Sewell out of San Francisco, a Jamelle Holieway out of Los Angeles, an Anthony Stafford out of St. Louis, a Louis Oubre out of New Orleans, and a Billy Brooks out of, of all places, Austin, Texas. So deep is Oklahoma in talent that often one former high school All-American finds himself competing against another former high school All-American for playing time.

"When Oklahoma recruits you, they expect you to be one of the top players around," says nose tackle Casillas, the Big 8's Defensive Player of the Year in 1984. "If you don't, there's something wrong and they'll let you know about it. You're expected to perform and live up to the tradition."

"It's an honor to wear an OU uniform," adds Troy Aikman, Oklahoma's sophomore quarterback. "When I go out there, I have something to live up to. The whole team does. We've got to try to maintain the tradition and play up to the level of the guys who preceded us. There's a sense of honor when you put that uniform on."

The players don't develop a winning attitude after they arrive at Oklahoma. Since almost all of them are plucked from the prep blue-chip recruiting list, they bring that winning attitude with them. What life at Oklahoma does is intensify that desire to win.

"The players Oklahoma recruits believe they have the best program, the best coaches, the best facilities, and the best players, so therefore, they should be the best team," says Owens, who led the nation in rushing in 1969 en route to his Heisman Trophy. "It wasn't an arrogant-type attitude. We just expected to win games and win championships. That didn't always happen. But when we did lose, we were always expected to come right back and win the next

week. It isn't often you see Oklahoma lose two straight games."

"Schools like Oklahoma, Southern Cal, and Notre Dame are expected to win—there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it," says Rick Bryan, a 1983 All-America defensive tackle and first-round draft pick of the Atlanta Falcons. "You go out and win, and if you don't, they'll fire the coaches or they'll put another player at your position. If you can't do it, someone else will."

SWITZER HAS THE REPUTATION of being a great motivator. He has been able to win the big games. He has a 6-3 record in bowl games and took a career 9-4 mark against his Big 8 archrival Nebraska into the 1985 season. When his team does not appear to have a clear-cut edge in talent on a given Saturday, Switzer will manufacture an edge. That's what he did before Oklahoma's regular-season finale against Oklahoma State in 1984. Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, and Nebraska all shared first place with one loss, and the winner of that game would go to the Orange Bowl as the Big 8 champion. The Sooners had not gone to the Orange Bowl in three years—so Switzer challenged their pride.

"Barry brought back J. C. Watts right before the Oklahoma State game last year, and he's standing there in front of the team with about four [Big 8 championship] rings on his hand," says Brown, speaking of the former Sooner quarterback. "That particular team had not won a Big 8 championship; Nebraska had won it three years in a row. So J. C. tells them this is a big game for a lot of reasons—'Fifteen years from now you don't want to be known as the Oklahoma team that didn't win a Big 8 championship.' You talk about putting pressure on young kids. Then he held up his hand with the rings and said, 'If you want one of these, go play hard and get one.' We wound up beating a good Oklahoma State team [24-14]."

There's a "We're all in this together" attitude that the Oklahoma players carry with them even after their college careers. A few, such as Davis and Owens, still live in the area, and many others return to Norman once or twice a year to visit with former teammates, coaches, and friends. The coaching staff has adopted an open-door policy, and the school makes the facilities available to its former players. "It looks like a pro camp around here in the summer," Donnan says.

"When you talk about Oklahoma, you talk about the people," Owens says. "Chuck Fairbanks, Jim Mackenzie, Barry Switzer, Galen Hall, Port Robertson . . . Barry describes it as 'family.' I didn't play with Joe Washington, but I have a great feeling for him. The same with Billy Sims. It's like we're

part of a big fraternity. It doesn't matter if you won the Heisman Trophy or were a third-string tackle—you're part of the family and you're always welcome back. It's a neat feeling.

"Oklahoma was such a big part of our lives, and it was such a good feeling that we want to continue it. A lot of us have helped them recruit in the past because we want them [high school seniors] to experience the same things that we experienced, the winning tradition."

Oklahoma has an annual recruiting banquet the weekend before the national signing date in February, and there isn't a dais large enough to seat all of the All-Americans who attend. "It's hard to get a group of Oklahoma people together and not have some All-Americans and a Heisman Trophy winner or two sprinkled in," says Davis, who arranges the banquet.

The old Sooners have a loyalty not only to Oklahoma but to Switzer. That's why a Sims would get on an airplane in Detroit and fly to Philadelphia, Miss., at the request of Switzer to make a recruiting pitch to Dupree back in 1982. Lee Roy Selmon has helped Switzer in Florida, and Cumby's cousin, quarterback Holieway, was one of the most highly recruited players landed by the Sooners last spring.

"He's a player's coach," Sims says of Switzer. "He cares about you, and it's genuine. He's one of the main reasons I went to Oklahoma. I have an awful lot of respect for the man."

And Switzer has a mutual respect for his players as men.

"The championships, the bowl games, and the winning are all fine," Switzer says, "but the greatest satisfaction I have is seeing all those guys who have gotten their degrees, grown up, gone into society, found a place for themselves, and remained friends. It's no longer a player-coach relationship. It's a man-to-man relationship, and I value that. It makes me feel good that they bring their children by to see me, stop by the house, call me in the morning, call me in the evening. Joe Washington, Billy Sims, Thomas Lott . . . I was close to all of them."

Switzer, Fairbanks, Sims, Owens, Davis, Bryan, Cumby, Casillas—they are all bound for life as Sooners and as winners. The tradition continues.

"It's like the Dallas Cowboys," Sims says. "The name stays afloat. Everyone knows about the Cowboys, and everyone knows about Oklahoma. Winning is good PR [public relations]. Winning is the only PR." ■

RICK GOSSELIN is part of the great family of college football writers. He's been covering Big 8 football and basketball for UPI for the last several years.

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1985 Season Recap
By Lonnie Wheeler

Baseball's Record Year

*Pete Rose, at 44, led the graybeards in
an assault on hallowed milestones, while Dwight
Gooden, at 20, was putting up new milestones*

IT SEEMS I WAS ABOUT NINE when I walked to the dime store every day of the summer for a pack of baseball cards—we never called them bubble-gum cards; they were *baseball* cards—and went to bed at night with a transistor radio playing into my pillow. Nine is about the age when baseball works its way inside a kid, dividing neighborhoods according to those who live by the game and those who don't. If you're not a boxscore baseball fan by nine or so, you'll never be—unless, by some quirk, you move from somewhere like Idaho to somewhere like Boston as a young professional and acquire the passion from those who came by it in the traditional way, when they were nine or so, lionizing Yaz and hating those excruciating minutes when the other team was up.

If you were nine last season, you would have been privileged to experience a season that galvanized the legends of two players who are the flagships for their baseball generations: one, a 44-year-old switch-hitter, assured of his immortality even while the singles still fall, and the other, a 20-year-old pitcher whose unimaginable future is predicted on an unthinkable beginning.

Pete Rose and Dwight Gooden, of course, are not one-man gangs for their distinct but overlapping generations. In the same year

that Rose broke Ty Cobb's record of 4,191 hits, contemporaries Rod Carew, Tom Seaver, and Phil Niekro also achieved career milestones, Carew and Seaver recording their 3,000th hit and 300th win, respectively, on the same remarkable day, and Niekro matching Seaver's feat, albeit with considerably more resistance, on the final day of the season. And while Gooden's first two seasons are the finest that any pitcher has ever had, his career will coincide with those of batting lions Wade Boggs, Don Mattingly, and Cal Ripken, those of Orel Hershisser and Bret Saberhagen, pitching prodigies of a more familiar scale, and that of base-stealing genius Vince Coleman—all of whom, in ways fast becoming distinctive, made 1985 for them the kind of season that great players have when they're young.

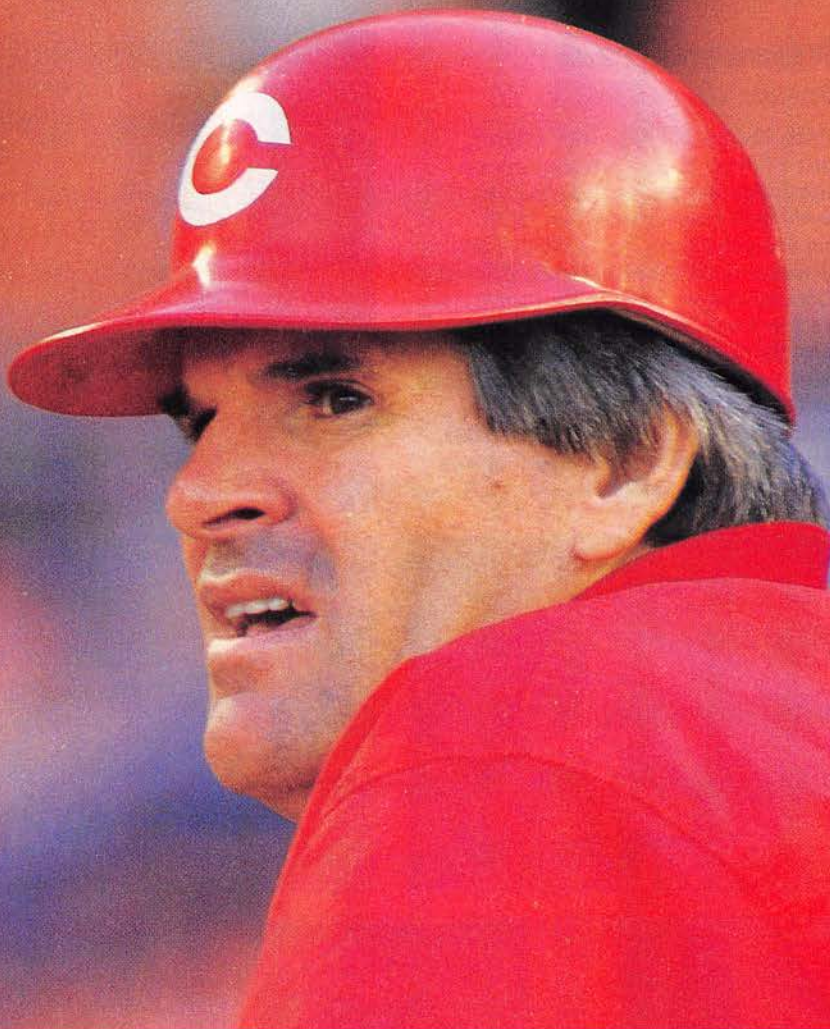
Those are the players whom today's nine-year-olds will grow up with in baseball, for whom they will feel a private and lifelong affinity. But they are also lucky to be nine when there is still a bridge between Gooden and Rose, at a time when both stand at ends of the swaying span, rising above it like massive Roman arches. There is a party of superstars in between—the likes of Dale Murphy, Eddie Murray, George Brett, Mike Schmidt, Reggie Jackson, Jim Rice, Darryl Strawberry, Kyne Sandberg, Fernando

Valenzuela, et al.—but in 1985, by the extraordinary accomplishments of an old hitter and a young pitcher, we saw the game being standardized.

I was at a meeting the evening of September 11, 1985, when I suddenly heard horns honking outside on Beechmont Avenue in Cincinnati. I looked at the clock—it was just about 8—and knew instantly what had happened. It would have been Rose's first time at bat against San Diego's Eric Show. The deed was done.

FOR CINCINNATIANS, THIS IS likely to endure as one of those man-on-the-moon type of events in which people remember exactly where they were and what they were doing at the time. As many as could get tickets were at Riverfront Stadium—some paying scalpers as much as \$50 a seat—and many had been there the night before, too, when Rose, uncharacteristically overanxious, went 0-for-4 against LaMarr Hoyt and Lance McCullers.

Cobb's record had been tied Sunday in Chicago, on a day in which Rose was supposed to be on the bench against lefthander Steve Trout. But Trout fell off his bicycle and was replaced by righthander Reggie Patterson. So, hours before the game, Rose



changed the lineup, writing himself in at first base. His family had already left for Cincinnati, and Reds owner Marge Schott was steaming as she listened to the broadcast on a radio in the press box at Riverfront, where the Cincinnati Bengals were playing the Seattle Seahawks. Rose had tried to get word to Schott that he would play, but there hadn't been time.

Honoring an obligation to himself, to Chicago, and to baseball, Rose got two hits by the fifth inning to reach 4,191, and two cities squirmed in anxiety. "I had 30,000 people yelling here and one lady back in Cincinnati kicking her dog every time I got a hit," said Rose.

He had two chances to break the record later that day, one against Lary Sorensen and one—after a rain delay—against Lee Smith with a chance to drive in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning. As darkness descended, Smith fanned Rose on a fastball. The game ended in a 5-5 tie, never to be played off. Only the statistics counted. Rose came to Cincinnati dead-even in a quest that had consumed 23 years.

When he arrived, he was greeted by a horde of media people that overflowed the press box, the auxiliary boxes, and the press dining room. He conducted two news conferences every day, invariably introducing

fresh material for the won-over writers. Once, comparing himself with Cobb for the 4,191st time, he pointed out that Cobb never batted against black outfielders, suggesting that it might have been less difficult to find the gap between Babe Ruth and Earle Combs than Willie McGee and Vince Coleman or Willie Mays and Bobby Bonds.

He sat out Monday's game against San Diego lefthander Dave Dravecky and looked oddly ill-at-ease in his hitless performance Tuesday. He apologized to the writers for keeping them away from the big Cardinals-Mets series in New York. After the game he talked to his attorney, Reuven Katz, who told Rose it was the first time he recalled that Rose hadn't looked like he was having fun at the ballpark. Rose decided he would have fun the next day.

Before the game Wednesday night, Rose said that he would certainly not go 0-for-4 again. All the signs were right. It was the 57th anniversary of Cobb's last game. Umpire Lee Weyer, who had been telling Rose for years that he would be behind the plate when he got the Cobb-breaking hit, was behind the plate. Ed Montague was umpiring at first base. Montague, whose father played for Cleveland when Cobb was terrorizing the American League, had called his dad that day to talk about the great outfielder. When he

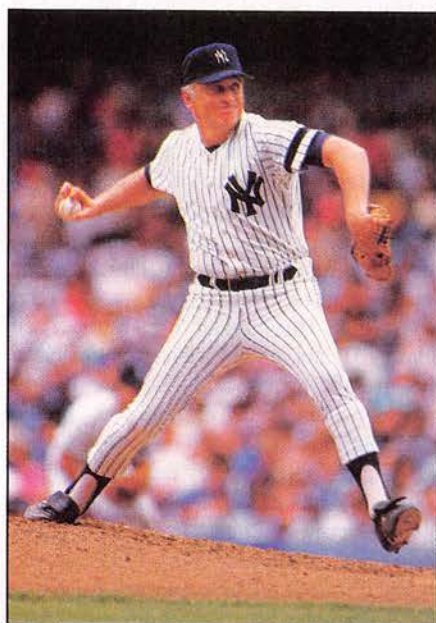
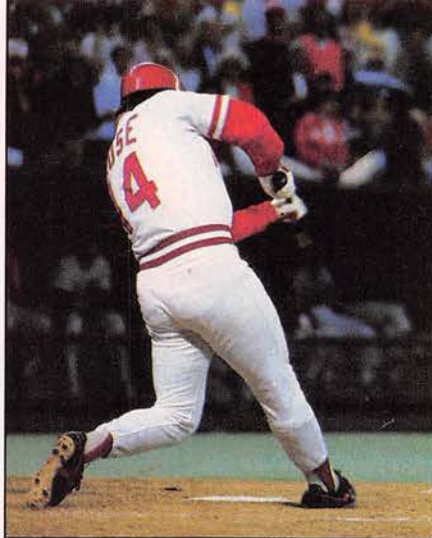
Rose's tears fell along with Cobb's record. 'It was like something from "The Natural."'

got to the park, he knew it would be the day. "It was like something from 'The Natural,'" he said. "The Goodyear Blimp was directly overhead. There were a few pink-tinted clouds in the sky. It was a perfect setting."

The game started 15 minutes late so that all could be in their seats for the first inning, which, it turned out, was when they wanted to be in their seats. Rose, batting left-handed against Show, hit a 2-and-1 slider on a looping line in front of Carmelo Martinez in left-center field. The crowd, which had been standing every time Rose batted for the past two games, exploded in a seven-minute ovation. Rose didn't know what to do. He said he was fine until he looked up and saw Cobb and his father. He hugged first-base coach Tommy Helms, an old friend going back to the minor leagues, and cried on Helms' shoulder. Rose's 15-year-old son, Petey, came out, and Rose cried on Petey's shoulder. Concepcion and Tony Perez lifted Rose on their shoulders. San Diego first baseman Steve Garvey, who earlier had one of the best lines concerning Rose ("He should bypass the Hall of Fame and go straight to the Smithsonian") approached to thank him

Present and Future Immortals—Alive in '85

Pete finally got 'The Hit' [right], but others, too, were playing on the fields of greatness. Seaver and Niekro each won No. 300. Rodney cracked his 3,000th hit. Gooden kept touring Route K toward Cooperstown. Mattingly emerged as the best Yankee hitter since The Mick. Fisk, at 36, found some new power. Reggie passed the likes of Ott, Banks, Mathews, and Williams on the home run list. And Vince Coleman swiped bases like no rookie before.



for the memories. When all of that was over, Rose stood at first not knowing what to do. They had taken the base away; there was no bag to kick. For once—at the peak of his lifetime—Pete Rose felt out of place on a baseball field. The man who flattened Ray Fosse and pounced on Bud Harrelson had again, with naked emotion, lodged baseball into the American gut. When the president phoned, Rose told him he had missed a great game.

ROSE'S GREAT FEAT FURTHER served to call attention to the landmark players who have performed since man reached the moon. Garvey was also the first baseman in 1974, when Hank Aaron hit his 715th home run in Atlanta. Graig Nettles, the San Diego third baseman, had come up as a teammate of Carew, Harmon Killebrew, and Tony Oliva, the man he calls the greatest hitter he has seen. Nettles was there when Yastrzemski got his 3,000th hit, and he caught Yaz's pop-up to end the great Red Sox-Yankees playoff game in 1978. "I've played with and against a lot of guys who will be in the Hall of Fame," said Nettles. "It's been a great era. But then, I imagine every player thinks that of his era."

Nettles, whose association with future Hall-of-Famers goes back to when he played amateur ball with Seaver in Alaska, was the most prolific home run hitter of all American League third basemen before coming to San Diego, and this year passed Yogi Berra and Joe DiMaggio on the big list. At the same time, Nettles' old Yankee teammate, Reggie Jackson, continued his ascent among home run greats, passing Mel Ott, Ernie Banks, Eddie Mathews, Willie McCovey, and Ted Williams to arrive in eighth place at season's end with 530, four behind Jimmie Foxx and six shy of Mickey Mantle. A less famous slugger, Dave Kingman of Oakland, hit his 400th career homer in '85 and moved ahead of Orlando Cepeda, Frank Howard, Johnny Bench, and Al Kaline into 20th place on the all-time list. Carlton Fisk, at 36, set an AL record for most homers by a catcher in one season, and was bidding to become the oldest home run champion since Cy Williams in 1927 until Detroit's Darrell Evans, 37, passed him and happily accepted the distinction and became the first player to hit 40 homers in both leagues. And Nolan Ryan, who struggled through a 10-12 year, still managed 209 strikeouts to elevate himself above 4,000 for a career—the first pitcher ever to reach that figure.

Meanwhile, Carew, who would be known as the most successful singles hitter of his time were it not for Rose—and has been the most artful and efficient, anyway—began the season as if he would hit .300 for the 16th time. But as the August 6 strike date ap-

proached, Carew began straining for his 3,000th hit. His average dropped sharply, and the hit came softly—a bloop single against Minnesota's Frank Viola two days before the players' abbreviated walkout. Carew soon regained his peerless stroke and passed Roberto Clemente, Al Kaline, Lou Brock, and Cap Anson to finish the season 12th in career hits with 3,053.

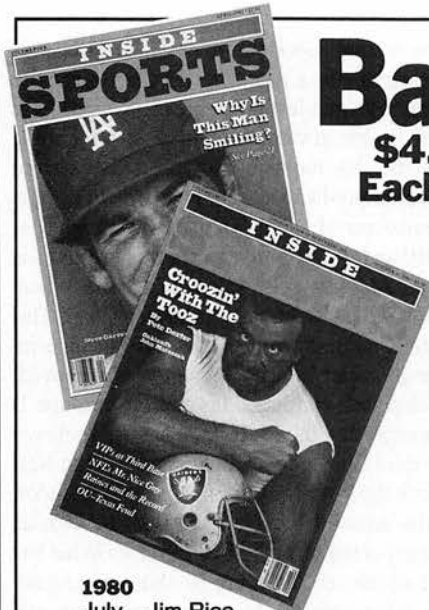
Yet, even as Carew was immortalizing himself, Boston's Boggs was verifying his status as the new Carew, winning his second American League batting title in four splashy seasons. Boggs' .368 average was the highest in the big leagues since George Brett's .390 in 1980, and it left him with a gaudy .352 career average. "I really like Boggs and Mattingly both," said one admirer, name of Rose. "I like them, one, because they can hit, and two, because they like the game. I had my picture taken with both of them at the All-Star Game."

"If I needed a single to win a game right now," said Nettles, "I'd go with Boggs. He's as disciplined a hitter as I've seen. He's far ahead of where Carew was at the same stage. Hitting is a lot more technical now, and I think kids are getting better instruction from the beginning."

One thing Boggs will never be that Carew was, though, is Rookie of the Year. Boggs was eligible in 1982, the year that Cal Ripken of the Orioles deservedly won it. Carew was AL Rookie of the Year for hitting .292 back in 1967, the year the National League honor went to Seaver, who won 16 games for the woebegone New York Mets. Eighteen years later, the selections proved providential as Carew and Seaver crowned their careers on opposite coasts, Carew doing it quietly in Anaheim, where he now plays first base for the California Angels, and Seaver hurling triumphantly for the White Sox before George Steinbrenner, Richard Nixon, New York City, and the minicams of metropolitan America. The final score was 4-1, matching Seaver's number.

Later, a deal to return Seaver to New York in a trade with the Yankees fell through, and the city turned its attention to another veteran pitcher trying to win his 300th. For Phil Niekro, though, nothing ever happened as fluidly as it did for Seaver, and Niekro knuckled under four times before winning his belated 300th at the age of 46 on the final day of the season, shutting out Toronto, 8-0. For Niekro, as for others in his goal-reaching class, the milestone spoke not so much of extraordinary seasons as of an extraordinary number of them.

AND SO WHILE SUCH VETERANS as Rose, Carew, Jackson, Seaver, and Niekro were reaching Cooperstown-style milestones, baseball ob-



1980

July—Jim Rice
August—Willie Randolph
September—Year of the QB
October—Monday Night Madness
December—Ray Meyer/Bear Bryant

1981

March—President Reagan
April—George Brett
May—Al Davis
June—Jan Stephenson/Jim Palmer
August—NFL's Best Kept Secret
September—Leonard vs. Hearn
October—John Matuszak
November—Tony Dorsett
December—Terry Bradshaw

1982

January—Randy White
March—Gerry Cooney
April—Steve Garvey
May—Pete Rose
June—Cooney vs. Holmes
July—What's Hot, What's Not
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1983
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December—Marcus Allen/Eric Dickerson
1985
February—Annual Swimsuit Issue
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servers paused to wonder if these old-young men would represent the last class of its kind. They wondered if the Murphys and Murrays, the Mattinglys and Ripkens, the Goodens and Valenzuelas, will have the motivation to stick with baseball for the 20 or so years it takes to amass the numbers of the Roses and Seavers. "I don't see anybody ever attaining those kinds of numbers again," said Schmidt, who in 1985 became only the sixth player—the others are Aaron, Ruth, Mays, Foxx, and Frank Robinson—to hit 30 or more home runs 11 times. Schmidt was referring specifically to Rose but generally to all of the achievers a few years older than he is. "The young players will never play that long. They'll never have to. They'll never want to."

"You have to have discipline and longevity to do it," said Don Sutton, who finished the season with the Angels, five short of 300 victories and publicly covetous of the grand number. "I don't think in the future there will be as many players who will be playing the game for sheer longevity and reaching milestones. Players will be more financially secure. You take a guy like Dale Murphy, who's a family man. He's a guy to me who has the intelligence to be a record-setter. But do you think he'll want to make the sacrifices for 20 years?"

Sutton is one who has made the sacrifices, sticking to his task more doggedly than most observers would realize. With Steve Carlton sidelined with a shoulder injury for most of the season, Sutton passed him to become the leading active pitcher in games started with 672. Along the way, he eclipsed such luminaries as Warren Spahn and Walter Johnson, leaving himself shy of only Cy Young (with an unreachable 815), Gaylord Perry (690), and Pud Galvin (682), who got nearly 300 of his starts when pitchers threw underhand. If he pitches regularly next year, Sutton could become the only man since Young to start 700 games.

Young's records—his 511 wins are 95 more than second-place Walter Johnson's—are still considered as unapproachable as Cobb's and Babe Ruth's once were, but they at least give us a distant galaxy in which to place the imponderable Gooden. His first two seasons have been the most sensational of any 20th-century pitcher, and have to be measured against Young to be measured at all. Only Herb Score, coming up with Cleveland in the mid-'50s, was in Gooden's league, but even Score was second-division compared to Doctor K. Gooden, who as a 19-year-old rookie in 1984 set a major league record by striking out 11.39 batters every nine innings, topped that with the best season a National League pitcher has had since Bob Gibson's 1.12 ERA in 1968, the pitcher-dominated season that led to the lowering of

the mound. Gooden's 1985 ERA of 1.53 was nearly a run a game better than Alejandro Pena's league-leading figure in '84, and he led the league in victories with a 24-4 record.

Still, his most memorable outings were two empty-handed outcomes he engaged in consecutively with the league's two best lefthanders. The first was a rubber match in Los Angeles with Valenzuela, with whom Gooden had split two earlier decisions. This time, neither team could score in nine innings, after which Gooden was removed. Valenzuela continued his shutout through 11 innings, and the Mets won against a reliever in the 12th. Gooden's next start came in New York against St. Louis' finessing John Tudor, who amazed the National League with an unexpected stretch of 20 victories in his last 21 decisions, including 10 shutouts. Again, Gooden refused to surrender a run and Tudor matched the great sophomore. Again, Gooden was removed after nine innings by manager Davey Johnson, mindful that Gooden's future was too precious to dally with. With a New York reliever in the game, Tudor won in 10, 1-0.

Although to project Gooden is to curse him—Score's career crashed when he was struck in the eye by a line drive early in his third season—there has never been a pitcher with Gooden's portfolio at the age of 20. Not only does Gooden have two historic years behind him, he also has the lanky body, the smooth motion, the even temperament, the competitive intelligence, and the disciplined work habits to portend an enduring success. At a 20-victory pace, which is not immodest, based on what he has already accomplished, Gooden will win 300 games by the time he is 33. If Sandy Koufax could make himself a Hall-of-Famer with five sensational seasons, Gooden could have his credentials in order at the age of 23.

It seemed in 1985, in fact, that Gooden's only weakness was a St. Louis switch-hitter named Willie McGee, who battered Dr. K at a .478 pace (11-for-23) on his way to his first batting title. By hitting .353, McGee recorded the highest average ever by a switch-hitter in the National League, surpassing Frankie Frisch and, naturally, Rose, whose high was .348 in 1969.

McGee was aided, no doubt, by the presence of a leadoff hitter who set a rookie record with 110 stolen bases. The Cardinals were struggling early in the season before injuries in the outfield forced them to bring up Vince Coleman from Louisville. Shortly thereafter, Tom Herr was established in the No. 3 spot after Coleman and McGee and in front of Jack Clark. Herr became the first man since George Kell in 1950 to drive in 100 runs with fewer than 10 homers, and fast-moving St. Louis proceeded to sweep through the NL East and become the base-

stealingest team since the New York Giants of 1912, who won their pennant with the likes of Fred Merkle, Fred Snodgrass, and Josh Devore.

Coleman's presence in St. Louis seemed to underscore the value of a leadoff man in the game as it was played in 1985. "I don't think that just because of the Cardinals that every team should go get another Coleman," said Rose. "You use what you've got. The Dodgers don't have a guy like that." Still, it was probably not coincidence that the highest-scoring teams were ones that put a champion base-stealer atop their order. The Yankees won 97 games, thanks partly to Rickey Henderson's club-record 80 swipes.

WHICH BRINGS US TO BASEBALL's bad news of 1985. It was a year thick with plot and heroism—Murphy's record April; Pedro Guerrero's record June; Earl Weaver's uneventful return to the Orioles; Billy Martin's eventful return to the Yankees, including an arm-breaking bar fight with pitcher Ed Whitson; Bob Horner's auspicious comeback; the purge of the Pirates; Parker's return to superstardom; Mattingly's arrival there; Joaquin Andujar's second straight 20-victory season for St. Louis; Tom Browning's for Cincinnati, the first by a rookie since Bob Grim in 1954; the trade, at long last, of Buddy Bell, sending him home; Dick Wagner taking over the administration of the Astros; Al Rosen taking over the administration of the Giants; the Cubs using 19 pitchers after all five starters went on the disabled list; the renaissance of the Dodgers; Murray's giant contract; the fall of the Tigers. But as full of itself as the game was last year, it will be remembered, too, as the season of drugs.

The immediate impact on baseball was not negligible but seems amorphous as we await a future and final shakedown. A trial was held and three suppliers of cocaine were convicted in Pittsburgh. Ballplayers testified with immunity and admitted their use of drugs. People were unsure of other players. Nine-year-olds wondered about their heroes: It was great to be nine and a baseball fan in 1985, but what about this drug stuff? What about it, Dad?

We don't know. We know that 1985 was the year of Pete Rose and Dwight Gooden, but as for the rest, we just don't know yet. The nine-year-old kids will have the answer themselves in a few years. In a few years, they will know whether 1985 was the year that baseball's drug problem really started, or the year that it really ended. ■

LONNIE WHEELER is a Rose fancier from way back. He claims he was nine years old when he saw Rose get his first hit. His last piece for I.S. was on Rose, of course.

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Rebirth On Broad Street

A photograph of three Philadelphia Flyers players celebrating on the ice. They are wearing their red and white home jerseys with the Flyers logo. The player on the left is holding a hockey stick high in the air. The player in the middle is also holding a stick and has his mouth open in a shout. The player on the right is holding a stick and has his mouth open in a shout. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows the ice rink and the arena seating.

The hated goons are ghosts, and playoff embarrassments are history. Now these young lions are winning new respect for the Flyers and bidding to become the NHL's Edmonton East

By Jay Greenberg



LAST YEAR WAS THE ONE THE Philadelphia Flyers were going to get theirs. Boy, did they deserve it.

If you've really loved hockey over the last decade, the Flyers have been more fun to hate than the Raiders, Celtics, Yankees, and Nikolai Volkoff combined. Not that the Flyers were any kind of dynasty. Once they became the first expansion team to win a Stanley Cup in 1974 (hey, somebody had to do it) there was no reason for prolonged jealousy. Anyway, it wasn't so much that the

battling back from a 3-1 deficit against Calgary, the Flyers gave up two power-play goals in the seventh game and died, 4-1.

They changed players, changed coaches, and ultimately it didn't make any difference at all. The National Hockey League became increasingly faster and more skilled, but the Flyers still had too many lummoxes hitting people over the head with their sticks.

They never learned. Despite maintaining the third-best lifetime winning percentage—behind Montreal and the Islanders—the

mon, and Doug Crossman when the playoffs started? Off choking, that's where.

Sure, they had broken in eight rookies in 1983-84 and still managed 98 points, but that was down eight points from the year before, and with Clarke, Barber, and Sittler still in the lineup. So now what?

The Flyers suddenly began thinking young. Why, it was positively hilarious. The team president was a 26-year-old kid whose father owned the team. Which was all the more reason to hate them. How could you like a guy like that? All Jay Snider, the new boss, did in one year was kick the venerable GM, Keith Allen, upstairs and replace him with sarcastic Bob McCammon, the very guy whose lousy coaching had caused the two straight playoff losses to the hated Rangers. The fans wanted a season that didn't end the first week of April—all Snider had given them was a Scorero game with an impossible million-dollar jackpot.

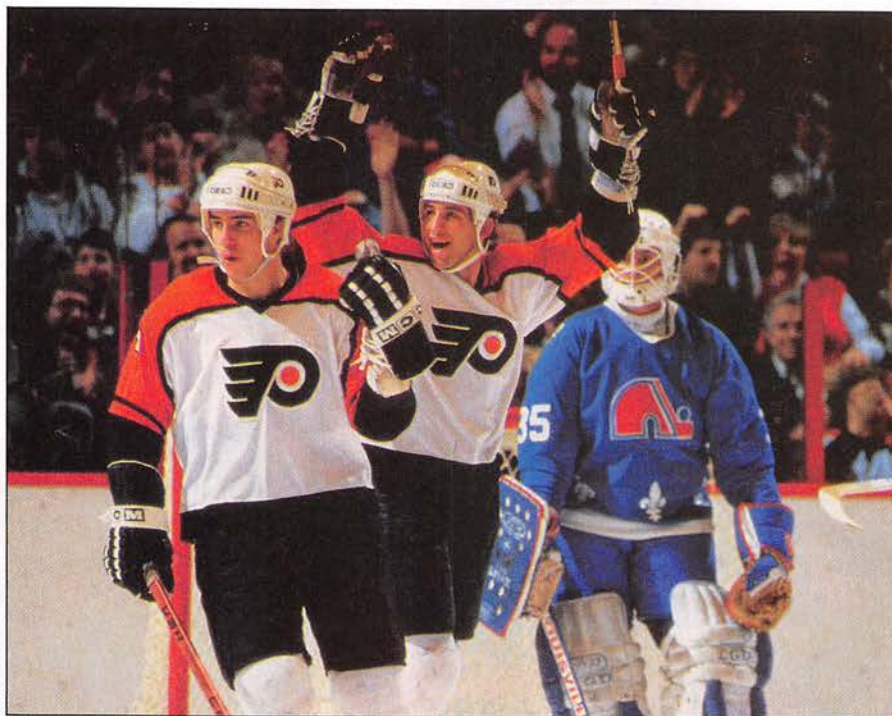
McCammon got into a public hissing contest with the franchise heroes, Clarke and Barber, and traded Paul Holmgren without even telling him. The fans were mad as hell and weren't going to take McCammon anymore, so they booed him into resigning.

The new GM, Clarke, had never even scouted a game, let alone trained for a front-office job. He had clearly been elevated to the job as a public relations token. And what were his first two moves? He used his first draft pick for a kid, Greg Smyth, with 252 penalty minutes, and then signed a goon, Ed Hospodar, who had nine goals and 804 penalty minutes in his five-year NHL career.

Nope, it was clear the Flyers would never learn. On opening night at the Spectrum, when they dimmed the lights to introduce a team with 12 first- and second-year players, it seemed like an excellent idea to play the entire season in the dark.

Peter Zezel? Derrick Smith? Rick Tocchet? Murray Craven? Who were these guys?

THE NHL'S REGULAR-SEASON points titlists, that's who. Stanley Cup finalists, too. With the youngest team in the league, a club averaging 24.5 years a player, the Flyers went on to run up 113 points, purge their Ranger nemesis in three straight, pack off the proud four-time champion Islanders in five, and wear down Quebec in six. They didn't win the Stanley Cup—going down in five to Edmonton—but by that time they were without their leading scorer, Tim Kerr, and one of their best defensemen, Brad McCrimmon. Besides, their captain, Dave Poulin, was playing with a cracked rib and could hardly breathe, let alone play. Enough was enough already, and Wayne Gretzky was too much. The Flyers had proved their point.



Smith [left] and Ron Sutter revived the offense via the draft.

Flyers were good as that they were just plain evil.

This was a team that practically mass-murdered its way to that '74 Cup and another one in '75. And even though the Flyers haven't won another championship since, they still copped enough games—an average of 48 victories a year from 1976 to '78—to keep that good old fear and loathing flowing.

Bobby Clarke was getting long between his gapped teeth, but while he still had bite, his team didn't really change much. Dave Schultz begat Jack McIlhargey, who begat Paul Holmgren, who begat Glen Cochrane, who begat Dave Brown, and the list of league suspensions went on and on. Every game was a morality play.

And the most delicious part about it? No matter how many regular-season games the creeps won, every spring they died by their own sword.

They got back to the finals in 1980, but lost while sitting in the penalty box. Denis Potvin and Mike Bossy tore them apart on the power play, and the Islanders began their run of titles. The next spring, after heroically

Flyers won exactly one playoff round in those four years. The beautiful, Europeanized Rangers and their smart American coach Herb Brooks devastated them two years in a row, then Washington, a team that hadn't even been in existence when the Flyers won their first championship, bumped them in three straight the following year.

The number of consecutive playoff game losses reached nine. And as 1984-85 dawned, the Flyers looked like Mediocre City. Sinners in the hands of angry hockey gods, they were really going to get it now.

Clarke had retired to become general manager. Ha—he couldn't slash anybody sitting in an office. Bill Barber's knee gave out for good. Served him right. Darryl Sittler was traded to Detroit on the season's eve for two kids who couldn't make the Red Wings. What did that tell you?

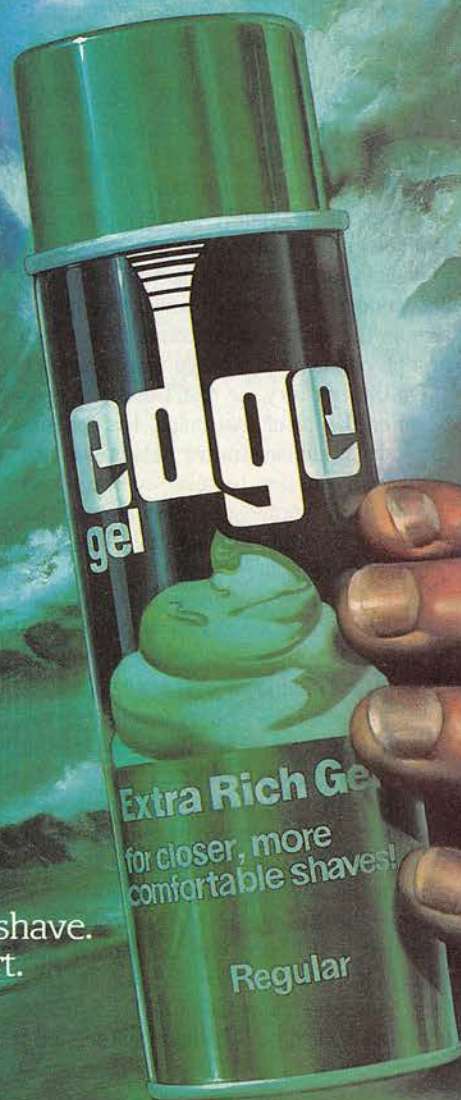
Terrible drafts in 1980 and '81 had left the Flyers full of holes. True, they kept their heads above water with some decent trades and got lucky on some free agents, but where were all these guys like Brian Propp, Mark Howe, Brad Marsh, Brad McCrim-



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They did it with speed, with defense, with goaltending, with discipline. They did it so well that they gained a leaguewide respect and admiration that had eluded them even in their championship years.

They did it because Clarke hit a gold mine in hiring Mike Keenan as his coach. Because Pelle Lindbergh bounced back from a nightmarish sophomore season to win the Vezina Trophy as the league's best goaltender.

They did it because Kerr, who came out of nowhere to score 54 goals the season before, proved it was no fluke by running up the same number again. Because in Howe, Marsh, McCrimmon, and Crossman, the Flyers already had a defense with all the requisite parts, and only needed a dab of Keenan's gel.

They did it because the middle-level veterans all responded with their best season; because kids like Ron Sutter, Craven, Zezel, Smith, and Tocchet turned out to be some of the best young talents in the league.

"The fans were looking for something new," Clarke said. "And we gave it to them."

The Flyers did it with 14 draft choices, five free agents, and seven players acquired by trade, and a lot of everything coming together at the right time.

Of course they didn't do this overnight. It only looked that way.

WHEN THE NEW GENERAL manager settled into his chair in May 1984, it was a surprisingly good fit. This wasn't such a shock to Clarke, who despite his public protestations had really seen the end coming as a player the previous year. But everyone who knew him and wondered how long it would take him to lace on the skates and become the league's first playing general manager was amazed.

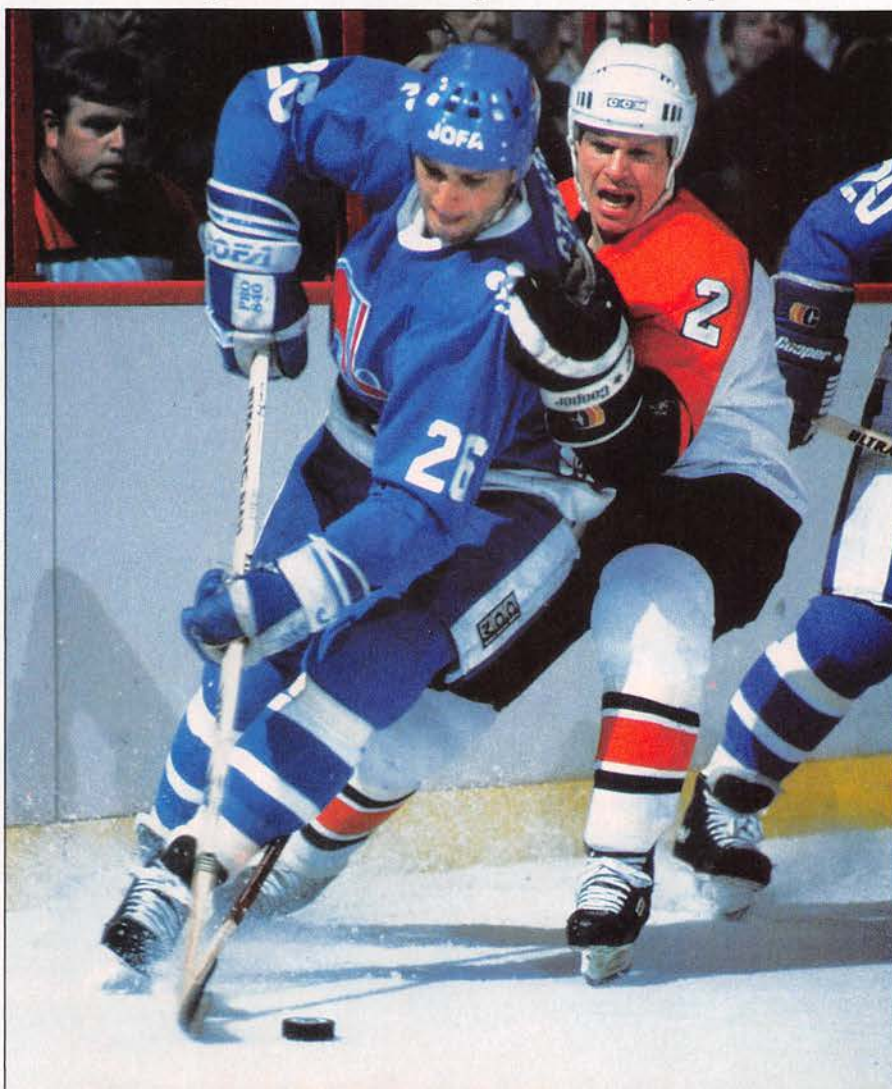
On the contrary, he didn't seem to miss being on the ice all that much. His appetite for learning administrative details was voracious, his desire to take over contract negotiations immediate. "Greater minds than mine thought I could do this," he said, and they were right.

Actually, the biggest adjustment, now that he had an office instead of a locker, was finding a place to spit his chewing tobacco. How about in the faces of the wily old GMs who were sure to call and try to rob him while his feet were still dry? But Clarke insisted he really didn't get much of that.

"I think they knew that with Keith Allen [now-a club vice president] and [holdover assistant GM] Gary Darling here I wasn't going to do anything stupid," Clarke said. Anyway, he had played on this team. And now that a stubborn veteran captain who thought he could go on forever was out of the way, he had no real reason to be tempted to make major changes. The team still needed a



Kerr [above] has the size and scoring numbers to intimidate, while Howe has proved that Gordie's genes were safely passed on.



left wing or two, but Clarke had been delivered into an already complete, smoothly functioning front office. "They left me a pretty good hand," Clarke said. "I didn't even have to hire a scout."

It takes a little more prodding, but he will give his predecessor, McCammon, credit. Frankly, he thought McCammon was a lousy coach but an excellent judge of personnel. The changes of the season before had not been smooth, but they had been necessary.

Actually, the Flyers had been undergoing their second major overhaul since the Cup years. The first one, which merged old heroes like Clarke, Barber, Jimmy Watson, Rick MacLeish, and Reggie Leach with good-looking young drafts like Pete Peeters, Ken Linseman, Behn Wilson, and Brian Propp appeared to be going right when the team went 35 consecutive games without losing and to the Cup finals in 1980.

But the following season, the bodies of the Flyers' two best defensemen, Jimmy Watson and Bob Dailey, began to break down. In 1981-82 the team bottomed out to 87 points, and it became clear to then-general manager Keith Allen that a lot of the players who had keyed the '79-80 team were turning out to be the wrong guys to build around.

Allen rebuilt much of the defense by trading Ken Linseman in a three-way deal that landed Howe from Hartford, and acquiring McCrimmon in a one-for-one swap with Boston for Peeters. It worked for a time, because the Flyers rebounded to run up 106 points, the second-best record in the league, the following season. But when Clarke and Sittler ran out of gas near the end of the season, the Flyers died again, this time in a ghastly three-game sweep at the hands of the fourth-place Rangers. They learned the hard way they still didn't have enough speed, and that a young man's league dictated a different kind of game.

Snider, installing McCammon as GM, gave him a mandate for more changes. The 1983-84 season, in which the Flyers worked in eight new players and still managed 98 points, was far from a washout in the sense of results. But it was a public relations disaster.

McCammon began cutting down on the ice time of Clarke, Sittler, Barber, and Holmgren, to insure that rookies Poulin and Ron and Rich Sutter played, and to preserve his veterans for the playoffs.

It got messy. Holmgren, Clarke's best friend on the team and a fan favorite, was traded to Minnesota in March, and the other vets were sent to Florida for pre-playoff R&R. Clarke whined mildly in print, and McCammon's stock with the fans, already low following the playoff debacle of the year before, sank further.

Barber's right knee went out for good

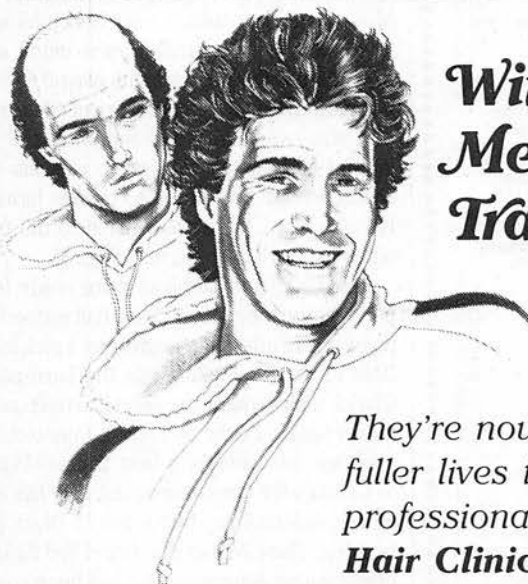
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before the playoffs, and the Flyers, by now a hodgepodge that was both too old and too young at the same time, went down in three straight again, this time to Washington. The fans chanted "Bob Must Go," and Snider told McCammon he couldn't work both jobs again the next year. McCammon, who didn't want to go out with nine straight playoff losses, believed the most difficult part of the transition was over and wondered what the hell kind of GM wasn't allowed to pick his own coach, even if he wanted to choose himself. He also saw Clarke's ascension to the front office as inevitable. So he resigned.

The Spectrum faithful were ready for a parade at that news, but they half missed the point. Ron Sutter, the team's No. 1 pick in the 1982 draft was looking like the hard-nosed Clarke replacement the team had been seeking for years. Poulin was quick, talented, and a leader. McCammon's first trade—Wilson to Chicago for Crossman—not only landed a better defenseman but a No. 2 draft pick besides. The GM had also found Ted Sator, a bright young American who had been coaching in a Swedish league, and hired him as an assistant.

McCammon had also made important front-office changes, hiring assistant GM Gary Darling away from Boston and firing a scout deemed responsible for the paltry drafts of 1980 and '81.

The 1982 draft—Allen's final one—which produced Sutter, veteran Czechoslovakian defenseman Miro Dvorak, and promising young center Todd Bergen, was a lot better. And in McCammon's one crack at the draft table as GM, in 1983, the Flyers hit the jackpot. Without a No. 1 pick—the Flyers had traded it in the Howe deal—they found three players who were ready to contribute. Peter Zedel, a fine playmaking center, was a No. 2 pick, Derrick Smith, a quick, hard-working left wing was a No. 3, and Rick Tocchet, a hard-nosed right wing and Holmgren's heir apparent, was a No. 6.

That's how some of the best and brightest young talent in the NHL came together. The Flyers had been able to keep their heads above water because the 1979 draft—Propp, Lindsay Carson, Thomas Eriksson, and Lindbergh—was a fine one, because they had some excess talent to trade to fill specific needs, and because they were both aggressive and lucky with free-agent signings such as Kerr, Ilkka Sinisalo, and goalie Bob Froese.

So what has Clarke done since taking over? Enough to finish the team. Leaning heavily on the advice of Allen and Darling, he made an excellent trade just before the 1984-85 season to get two young left wings, Murray Craven and Joe Paterson, for Sittler. Craven, to Detroit's surprise, turned out to be an excellent skater with 35-goal ability

and schooled in every aspect of the game. Paterson, who spent most of the season in the minors, did some valuable plugging in the playoffs and chipped in some big goals.

Clarke also made a nice little move in signing Hospodar, who filled in capably and provided a needed hitting element to the defense. And, oh yeah, Clarke did one more thing. Although Darling, Allen, and Snider did a lot of the screening, it was Clarke who selected Mike Keenan, the 35-year-old coach of the University of Toronto, to replace McCammon.

IF MIKE KEENAN WERE A MULTIPLE-choice question, the answer would be (z) all of the above.

There is no easy characterization, few idiosyncrasies. Perhaps the Flyer coach's most identifying mannerism is his squint. The eyes narrow a bit, like it's time for a change of contacts, but what really might be occurring is a change of personalities.

Keenan's is, by design, not easy to figure out. What, Dave Poulin is asked, is the presence of Mike Keenan?

"It is everything," he says. "He is capable of everything. And when you use the term 'presence,' that is definitely the case.

"He is diverse enough to do what has to be done. With all the different personalities on a team, a successful coach has to be versed in psychology.

"He figured each of us out very quickly. And the key is he's pushed us more than we've been pushed in the past. We're doing more than we thought we were capable of."

"Enigma" doesn't quite fit—everything Keenan does makes too much sense. But he's comfortable with that appraisal, probably because it makes his players uncomfortable. "I think you always have to be changing," he said. "I don't think you can classify my methods of motivation as being of one particular mode. I'm predictably unpredictable."

But that's no chameleon striding behind the Flyers bench, but a hockey coach. The Flyers won for more reasons last year than simply because Keenan was good at playing mind games. His attention to detail—best exemplified by each player having his own water bottle with his number on it—was just short of compulsive. He arranged for team dinners after playoff games even when the club wasn't traveling, to make sure his players were eating the right things.

He is not so much innovative as he is thorough, leaving as little to chance as possible. The Flyers practiced as they were expected to play—at a high tempo, and the degree of organization became more and more obvious as their confidence built.

His greatest strength, however, is behind the bench. "It's the ability to use the right

people at the right time," Clarke says. And in Keenan's case it manifests itself more in percentages than hunches. He used injuries to build a flexibility that served him well during the playoffs. Even on the road, without the last line change, he was usually able to get some part of the matchup he wanted.

Keenan hates losing. There's nothing enigmatic about that, just a bit of plain old arrogance. He uses words like "intrinsic" and "synergistic," and even if the players don't know what they mean his eyes tell



Clarke's toughness and judgment carried into the front office.

them they'd better bear down. After a loss, he'll put it in four-letter words they understand.

Except for the odd outburst against an erring player, Keenan is much more positive than negative. His players play under control because that's the way the coach operates. Usually, the steam comes out in measured levels. "It's knock them down with the left hand after a loss," said assistant coach E. J. McGuire, "then bring them back soothingly with the right hand, the stronger one."

"Winning is expected. Losing, well, we don't make them miserable, but we give little signs that tell them how much easier their lives will be if they win."

IT ONLY SEEMED OVERDUE, both by three years and 8:01 of overtime. When the Flyers blew a three-goal lead in the opening playoff game and the Rangers tied it in the last minute, it seemed like it might never come at all. But, actually, Ron Sutter, drafted the same year the Flyers suddenly forgot how to win in the playoffs, arrived behind the net and upon Reijo Ruot-salainen right on schedule.

This was no coincidence. Mark Howe was in the right place at the right time and didn't miss, but it is winners like Sutter who seize the moment. It was why Mark Pavelich, Sutter's check in the opening round, and Bryan Trottier and Peter Stastny, his foils in the next two, couldn't get enough done to make a difference. And it was a big reason why the Flyers' nine-game playoff nightmare was about to end.

Sutter was behind the net and upon the Ranger defenseman before he could move the puck. And now Sutter's pass was coming to Howe as he moved in to the edge of the circle. Howe wristed a shot and three years of frustration burst when he hit the back of the net.

The hockey cliché for the capitalized chance is that Howe "made no mistake." More than a bromide this time, it was a virtual prophecy. Gordie's kid was almost flawless the entire playoffs.

They had always wanted him to be more than that. God had given Mark Howe an effortless stride, superstar skills, and a famous dad to live up to. The expectations were always a bigger problem for others than for Mark.

He had reached peace a long time ago with who he was, rejecting all attempts to make him otherwise. Heart, to Howe, was not accepting a captaincy, or dominating a game offensively. It was playing hurt, being in position, picking his spots to go and effectively moving the puck.

The Whalers, questioning why he didn't do more, had traded him. The Flyers, with plenty of other people to lead, were more understanding, but now he had spent two years with a winner that hadn't won when it counted. And with two mediocre playoffs behind him, it was time Howe finally gagged the whippers.

In his own way, in his own space, Howe slapped the doubters in the face. He was quick, steady, smart, consummately skilled, and a lifeline out of the Flyer end. And unlike the last two playoffs, this time Mark had enough help from his friends.

McCrimmon, whose confidence had been buried on the Boston bench and who for two years had justified the Peeters trade only in flashes, had it all together now. The lumbering Marsh, with a heart that Clarke says is as big as his webbed feet, blocked shots, always took his piece of the body, and tirelessly stood his ground in front of the net. Crossman, the early-season disappointment, got his confidence back, and time after time pivoted away from the opposing fore-checkers.

Cast in the role of ghosts, the Rangers were going down hard. It took a late goal by Sinisalo to put away Game 2, and as the series shifted to Madison Square Garden,

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the Flyers' long-awaited advancement to the second round still seemed farther away than just one more win.

And then Kerr, shut out against Washington the year before and feeling the pressure as much as any of them, lifted the Flyers onto his broad back. Zezel, unwinding too, started to make the passes, and Kerr began to score and score and score. Four times in an 8:16 stretch the big guy with the butter-soft hands made the light go on, and a 2-0 deficit had turned into a 6-3 lead.

It was devastating. Also, inevitable. The NHL has not seen a presence like Kerr's since Phil Esposito. Undrafted as a 19-year-old, held back for three seasons by a series of injuries, the league's best-kept secret had burst upon it with 54 goals the season before.

Unable to hold their ground against his 6'3", 225-pound frame, defensemen tried holding and hacking, all to no avail. The smarter ones held position and tried to poke around him, but this pterodactyl could reach farther and put the puck on goal in the blink of an eye. With a frustrating shutout last year against Washington behind him, it was simply Kerr's, like Howe's, turn.

The Rangers—God, would they ever quit—cut it to 6-5 with two early third-

period goals, and now the Flyers' souls were stripped naked again before the pressure. "We still have the lead—play our game," Keenan said calmly as the storm swirled around him. Did they ever. Sutter won one last draw and Craven chipped it out and it was over. And just beginning.

The Islanders were next. They were older and slower, but after coming back from losing the first two games to beat Washington, they were still, assuredly, the Islanders. The more rested Flyers figured to get the jump and they did, winning 3-0 and 5-2, on a Propp hat trick. But now the Isles were going home to play the game they absolutely needed—the one they had always won.

Live long enough and one will see just about everything. This time, it was the Islanders who took four first-period penalties. The Flyers counterpunched to a 4-1 lead, then braced for the final desperate fury of a proud former champion.

The Islanders came and came and came. They launched an amazing 27 second-period shots, but Lindbergh, at his best now, stopped all but two of them.

Clark Kent ducked into the phone booth and the Flyers latched the door. The Isles took a deep breath and expanded their chests, and nothing gave. They screamed and pounded away, but the Flyers were too well-coached to yield.

It was over when Sinisalo hit the empty net. It wasn't official until the Flyers pushed the pillow into the Islander face with a 1-0 suffocation four nights later at the Spectrum, but the Isles had without ceremony handed over what had been so fiercely, proudly, and uniquely theirs.

When they asked Lindbergh whether the monkey was now off his back, he looked over his shoulder in bewilderment. They explained the expression and he loved it, walked around for days saying, "Look, no monkey."

He, too, had paid his dues. The year before had been what Lindbergh had termed "one big slip on a banana peel." His gentle nature had not been lost in the nightmarish sophomore season, but his confidence had. Still, he burned to prove that a Swedish goalie could be as good as any with a season on the line.

With Froese hurt for much of the season, the Flyers had handed Lindbergh the entire load. He won them, and himself, back by throwing away the book of too many well-intentioned dos and don'ts that had been pushed on him and by relying on his reflexes. They were too sharp to let him down.

And by the time he blew a Dale Hunter shot from the blue line in Game 4 of the Quebec series, he had come too far to let something like that bother him any longer.

Game 5, probably more than any in the

playoffs, belonged to Lindbergh. The Flyers, perhaps feeling the pressure for the first time since the Ranger series, came out playing like they were afraid to lose, but Lindbergh didn't let them. For two periods the Flyers did nothing, but thanks to the little Swede, were down only 1-0.

Keenan, sensing the series slipping away, challenged his players by reminding them of the opportunity. And the Flyers, like all good teams, found a way to win on a bad night. Howe set up Paterson, Propp fed Craven, Lindbergh allowed nothing, and somehow the Flyers escaped, 2-1.

And now they could smell it. Leading 1-0 early in the second period of Game 6 and short two men for almost a full two minutes, Poulin, Captain Courageous playing with a cracked rib, turned bloodhound.

Through the March stretch drive Poulin had been uncanny in his ability to make the big play at the right time. "Like the man he replaced as captain," Keenan had said, and now Poulin was stepping between the points, intercepting a pass, and soloing in on goalie Mario Gosselin.

Everything—five Nordiques, the late start in a professional career—was behind the once-165-pound runt now. When Poulin's draft years came up, the fast little man couldn't play in the NHL because the Flyers had been winning with big guys, but Sator, who had coached him in Sweden, knew better. The chance, hours of hard work, and the force of Poulin's personality had proven the assistant right.

Poulin buried the puck over the goalie's shoulder as the Spectrum exploded in one of its all-time electrifying moments. Almost as if celebrating their season-long rebirth, the Flyers went on to play their best game of the season, winning 3-0.

They did it again, five nights later in the opener of the finals, dominating the Oilers, 4-1. But Kerr's knee, injured in March, finally gave out for good. McCrimmon was by then gone with a separated shoulder, Poulin's ribs were on fire, and the Oilers, who dug down to grind out the second game, gradually and inevitably took over the series. Even Lindbergh, who had stretched knee tendons against Quebec, could not, by the final game, answer the bell. But it tolled in celebration, not defeat.

Few seasons that had not ended in a championship had ever been so rewarding. The Flyers had gotten theirs all right. Their act, finally, together. ■

Contributing writer JAY GREENBERG has some fond memories of Flyer goons of the past, because he was never able to see any of boxing's heavyweight championship fights in person. Jay's last piece for I.S. was on hockey's unwanted players.

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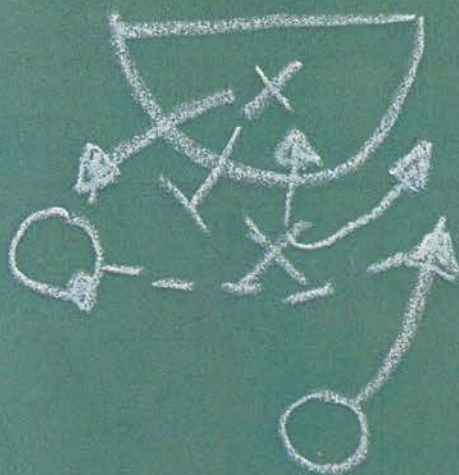
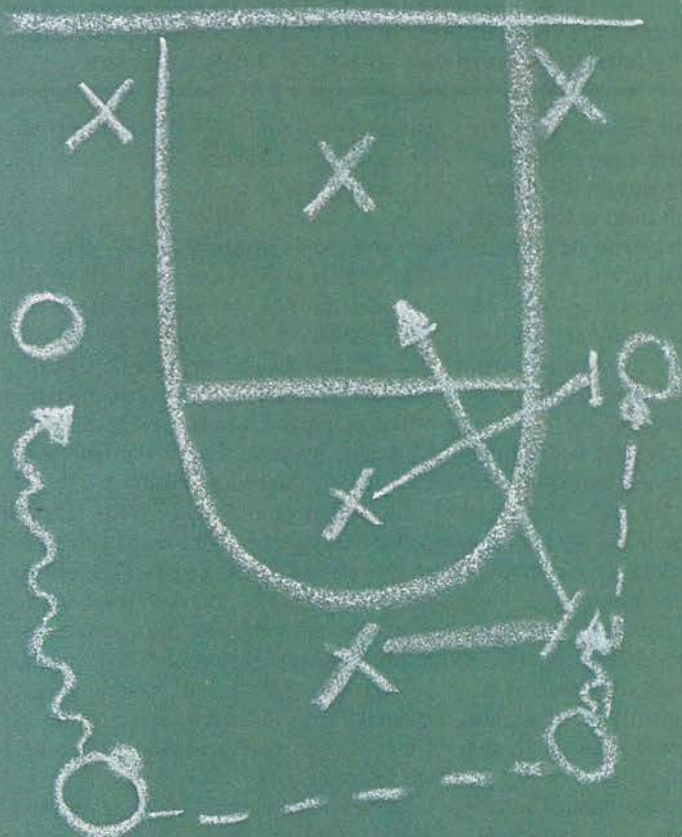
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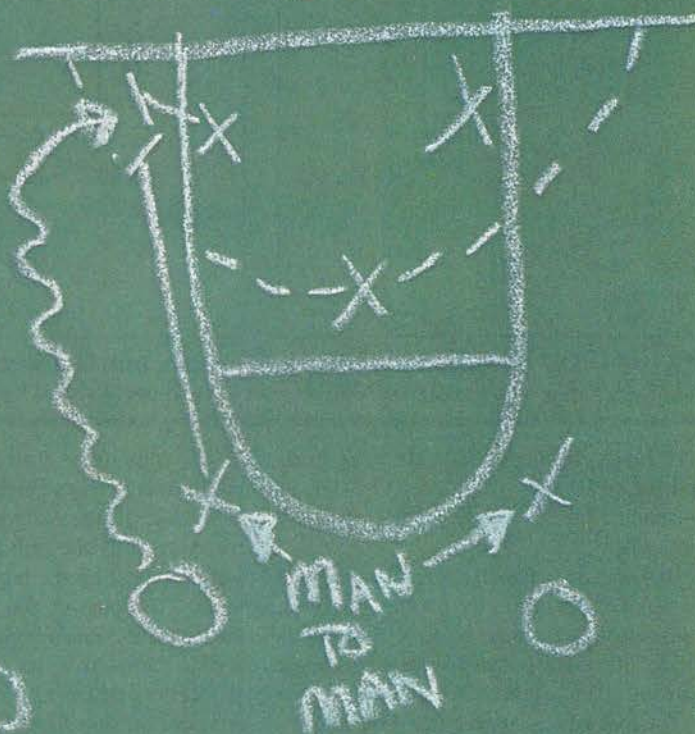
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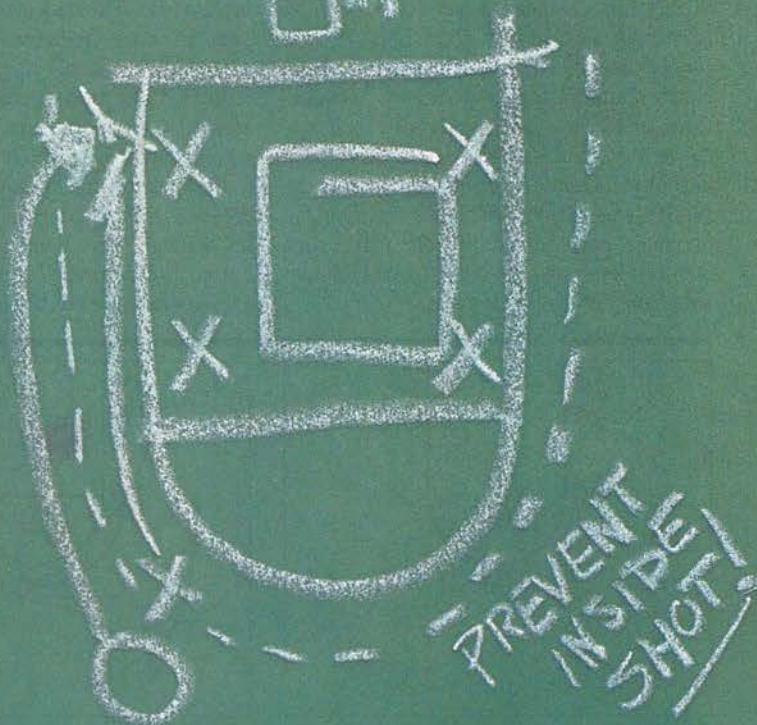
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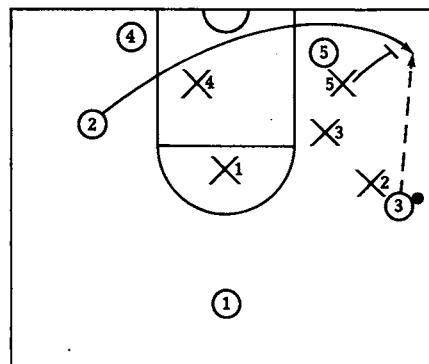
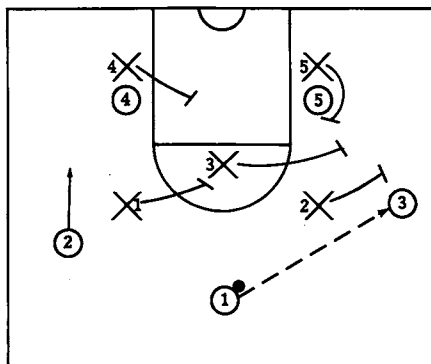
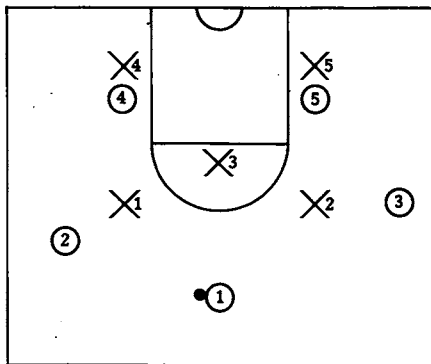


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2-1-2 Powerful rebounding formation, but, like all zones, susceptible to quick passing. To beat this zone overload one side of the court—best done by having the weak-side guard cut through the lane.

sure zones included Jack Kraft at Villanova and Harry Litwack at Temple. Philadelphia became a battlefield for zones of every persuasion.

One of Kraft's finest players was George Raveling, who currently coaches at Iowa. "Basketball was always very cerebral in Philly," Raveling explains. "Elsewhere, most coaches still had little regard for zones."

The majority opinion endured for generations, even though Frank McGuire's imported New Yorkers used a box-and-one zone to stymie Wilt Chamberlain as North Carolina won the 1957 NCAA title. *Goliath loses again. So what? The success of a freak defense against a freak ballplayer proves nothing.*

Imagine the surprise of the hoop-wise traditionalists when the 1979 NCAA championship was captured by Jud Heathcote's Michigan State squad, which zoned from tip to buzzer. *The man is dead! Long live the zone!* Since then, zone-happy teams from North Carolina State, Kentucky, Georgetown, and Villanova have all zoned their way to victory, and "position defenses" have become eminently respectable. Even in the Big 10, where Bobby Knight's theories and practices perpetuated the old faith, such man-to-man stalwarts as Iowa and Minnesota have now gone to zones.

"Everywhere you look zones are proliferating," says Princeton's Pete Carril. "I think the biggest reason is the current trend to stuff the ball inside. Everybody wants to post up the big men and draw the fouls. They post up the forwards and even the guards. Sounds great, but it's also created a throwback generation of inferior shooters. And teams with active pivotmen and poor outside shooters are just asking to be zoned. It's a vicious cycle."

In past times, when a team trailed by three points with two minutes left they'd abandon all zones and chase the ball. Nowadays coaches expect the new 45-second shot clock to encourage zoning teams to zone even when behind in the endgame.

Carril cites another reason for the popularity of zones: "Today's college players are terrible passers. Anybody can pass well in a broken field. The trick is to do it in a halfcourt situation when the defense is set and there's a hand in your face."

Indeed, the loudest voice among the anti-zone faction still belongs to Bobby Knight, who simply won't use one.

Perhaps the most pragmatic critic of zone defenses is North Carolina's Dean Smith. "In my opinion," says Smith, "zones are strictly a stopgap measure. We'll use them late in the game when we're ahead. Or we'll zone

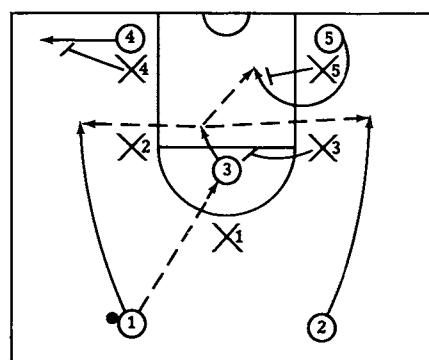
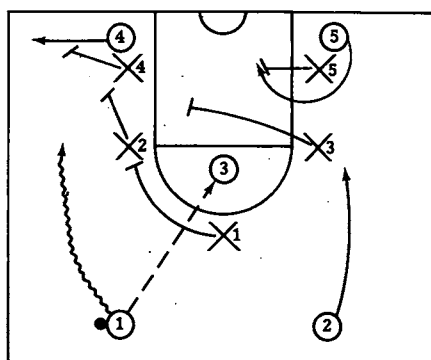
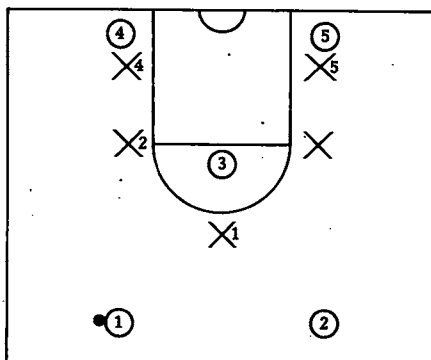
whenever we play three big men together. The only real advantage is that zones take much less time to teach."

2-1-2

The most archetypal of zone defenses, the 2-1-2, is played in schoolyards, in beer leagues, in the lunchtime games at the local Y. The standard 2-1-2 front shows the point guard (1) and the shooting guard (2) chasing the ball. The small forward and the power forward patrol the baseline, while the center (3) roams the lane. Every shift and every slide follows the bouncing ball.

Like other zones, the 2-1-2 can hide bad defensive players and also keep foul-plagued players active on the court. Theoretically, the 2-1-2 should be a powerful rebounding formation. In real basketball, most zoners invariably hesitate before choosing someone to box out. This means that opponents generally rush three rebounders to the offensive boards, sometimes four if the zoners are reluctant to fastbreak.

"Zones are vulnerable," says Joe Mulaney, a veteran zone coach at Providence now serving as assistant athletic director, "because the ball can always be passed faster than a man can run. Against a 2-1-2 you'd fill in the gaps and run a 1-3-1 offense. Just work one side for a while, then reverse the ball and catch somebody wide open on the weak



1-2-2 Most successful when used to trap on sideline or corner. Leaves middle of the lane vulnerable for cross-court pass. Formation demands quickness and weak-side help.

side. You can also fastbreak any zone, attacking the basket before the big men get back and get set. That's why Dean Smith's teams will only zone up after they score."

The 2-1-2 alignment presents too many holes and is especially vulnerable to overloading. Should No. 3 come to No. 4's rescue, No. 2 simply shoots the gap. In addition, defenders No. 5 and No. 4 are also susceptible to baseline picks.

These days, the basic 2-1-2 survives under the likes of Jerry Tarkanian at UNLV, Dale Brown at LSU, Mike Krzyzewski at Duke, and Jim Valvano at North Carolina State.

By all accounts, Michigan State's 1979 NCAA champs played the most potent 2-1-2 in modern times. Jud Heathcote's starting lineup featured three future pros—Greg Kelser and Jay Vincent along with 6'9" Earvin (Magic) Johnson. In fact, Heathcote's cagey 2-1-2 was just an excuse to let Magic and his mates run to glory.

1-2-2

A laid-back 1-2-2 is relatively defenseless. "With the middle so empty," says Tom Penders of Fordham, "we'll shoot a 2-1-2 alignment, looking to move the ball into the corner, then drop the high post into the pivot. Sometimes we like to flood the baseline with a double stack. Disciplined offenses can usually find easy shots against conventional 1-2-2's. Trouble is that hardly anybody uses the 1-2-2 without trapping the sidelines and corners."

Many basketball buffs believe that the most devastating varieties of 1-2-2 pressure zones were taught by Tom Davis during his remarkable tenure at Boston College. "I grew up near Green Bay, Wis.," says Davis, who now coaches at Stanford, "so naturally I was always an ardent football fan. The original idea for my 1-2-2 came from the so-called 'Chinese Bandits' used by Paul Dietzel at LSU. Dietzel simply zoned his defensive backfield and matched his All-America line-backer against the opponent's most dangerous player. Translated into basketball terms, I actually play a 2-2 zone with a wild card."

The apex of Davis' zone is reserved for his most versatile athlete, usually a small forward. Sometimes the wild-card player guards a man, sometimes a space, and sometimes he hounds the ball. A truly protean defense, Davis' celebrated 1-2-2 became a 2-3 when Boston College nearly upset Virginia in the 1982 NCAA Tournament and the wild card fronted 7'4" Ralph Sampson. "The guys I used at that spot ranged from 5'9" to 6'2", Davis recalls, "and it sure looked ludicrous. But big guys don't like little guys sniping at their dribble and buzzing around their knees."

Despite Davis' success with the 1-2-2, he

is a reluctant prophet. "The 1-2-2 is extremely weak inside," says Davis. "Even with our traps, good post play and good perimeter shooting always give us headaches. Believe me, if my players were quick enough, I'd much rather play man."

In addition to Davis, Pete Carril is also hailed as a 1-2-2 expert—except that Carril regards all zones with loathing. "You play zone for one reason," says Carril, "and that's because you can't guard your man."

No wonder Carril still agonizes over one fateful evening just six years ago: "We were coming home from a Christmas tournament in Hawaii after two miserable losses. Our record had dropped to 2-and-11 and we were flying at 40,000 feet. Merry Christmas. Ho, ho, ho . . . It was either zone or jump."

1-3-1

The 1-3-1 was originally invented by Clair Bee to shut down an enemy's pivotman. It used to be a graceful dance played tough in the middle and soft around the edges. Concede the outside shot and swarm the big man. But as the pace of college basketball has quickened, most of Bee's classical 1-3-1 concepts have been totally radicalized.

As before, the 1-3-1 continues to provide outstanding court coverage and is well-pointed to delay any reversal passes. Today's 1-3-1 is always aggressive, aiming to trap the ball between the point man and either wing. As always, the 1-3-1 remains the poorest rebounding zone extant.

In recent years, Roy Chipman at Pittsburgh has also adjusted the 1-3-1 to suit his own basketball theologies. "One obvious difference," says Chipman, "is that I was the first to extend the 1-3-1 so that both wings showed at the hashmarks. This way we can trap and disrupt the offense as soon as they cross the time line."

In the traditional 1-3-1 the back man was always a center, but in Chipman's variation the zone of last resort is protected by a diminutive point guard. "We'd rather have quickness back there than size," says Chipman. "The extra speed lets the back man cover the entire baseline. Now we can trap in both corners and also draw charging fouls in the paint."

On the debit side, Pitt sometimes gets caught with its point guard defending a center: "The worst thing that happens to us is when a team can work the ball into the low post. From there it's just turn around and stuff it inside."

Against Pitt's zone, rival coaches like to roll players in and out of both the high and low posts. "It's important that our center be very active," says Chipman. "His job is to cover the foul circle from top to bottom. For us to win, he's got to three-quarter the high post and deny the entry pass. Our centers have to be real quick."

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Chipman understands that basketball is a right-handed game with nearly seven of every 10 shots launched from the right side. As a result, the majority of errant shots will rebound leftward—and that's exactly why Chipman always plays his best rebounder on the left wing.

According to Chipman, however, the command position in his 1-3-1 is the point man. "I want a big guard with long arms out there,"

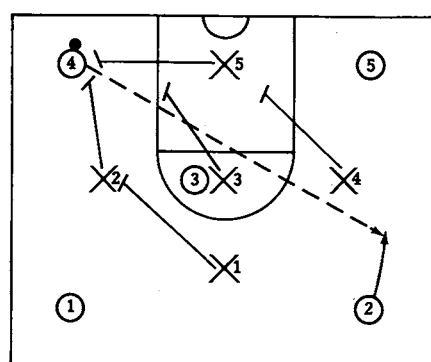
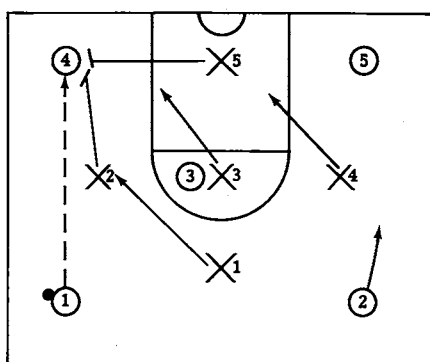
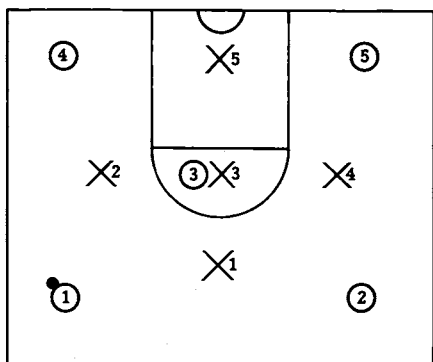
Achilles' heel. Should the offense manage to reverse the ball quickly, there's usually a two-second opening on the weakside wing and we'll get burned."

"Jim Boeheim's strength is offense," says another prestigious coach, "and his 2-3 is barely adequate. But what can you say? Syracuse recruits great talent and they're a fixture in the NCAA Tournament. Sometimes adequate defense is all you need."

"All the kids want to play man today," Smith adds, "so they'll be better prepared for a shot at the pros. That's why so many coaches lie when they say they'd prefer to play man-to-man. Nonsense. That's just recruiting talk."

1-1-3

Another bizarre defense from Sonny Smith, the 1-1-3 effectively seals the middle against every conceivable offensive shape



1-3-1 Good trapping defense, demands quickness out front. Point guard has to force the ball to one side and then defense traps in the corner. Vulnerable inside and to cross-court pass.

says Chipman. "Say 6'6" and plenty mobile. Whenever the ball gets to the sidecourt the point man has to drop back and cover the high post. So the guy also has to be tough enough to battle the boards. We go 1-3-1 about 60% of the time, and I'll try to recruit somebody with the specific capabilities to point up my zone."

If several Big East coaches champion Chipman's 1-3-1, other coaches remain unimpressed. "I've certainly got no axe to grind," says George Raveling, "but Pitt is definitely not a good defensive team. Personally, I think Chipman's 1-3-1 gives up too much inside."

2-3

The 2-3 is meant to steer the ball toward baseline traps. Jim Boeheim, the distinguished coach of the Syracuse Orangemen, also favors the 2-3 because it keeps his center "at home."

To confound the 2-3, well-coached teams are liable to show a 1-3-1 offense and work the high post for easy shots. "We protect the post area with our weakside guard," says Boeheim. "He's responsible for dropping back to the foul line and denying the incoming pass. If that doesn't work, if the ball does get into the high post, then our center must come out strong and change the zone into a good ol' 2-1-2."

Despite the weakness in the middle, the main burden of Syracuse's defense actually falls to the wingmen. "We feel we can plug the lane," says Boeheim. "But the wings cover a large area bounded by the baseline and the foul line extended, and that's our true

3-2

An old-timey defense used by Jack Kraft to clog the middle and challenge outside shooters. The 3-2 has been somewhat revived by Sonny Smith, the zone-master of Auburn.

"I just love zones," says Smith, "because I think the advantages are considerable. First off, you avoid committing extraneous fouls—the opposition has to earn every point. Using zones also means you only need seven or eight quality players, an important consideration with recruiting getting more and more competitive."

Contrary to popular opinion, Smith also feels that zones actually facilitate rebounding. "Only those zones with horizontal lane coverage like the 1-3-1 are weak off the boards," says Smith. "But all my favorite zones pack the big men around the goal like a big wad of chewing gum."

Nor is Smith intimidated by self-proclaimed zone-busters. "Don't be misled," he says. "The field goal percentages are way up only because the inside game dominates. Truth is that players can't shoot so well from the outside these days. They're forever shooting off balance and on the move. Their shot selection is simply atrocious. I'm happy to see most anybody try to shoot us out."

Smith zones exclusively, but his game plan is flexible: Auburn routinely shows the 3-2 zone only for short stretches before rotating into various other defensive configurations—perhaps 2-1-2 or 2-3, sometimes a Triangle-and-Two.

and shading. The 1-1-3 is bottom-heavy to ravage the boards and prevent second shots. In addition, the frontline 1-1 tandem can force the ball to one side or the other. Leftward, perhaps, then blunt the reversal pass and confine the offense to the left-side quadrant.

Most of all, Smith uses the 1-1-3 as a lead-in for other zones. With minimal shifting, the 1-1-3 becomes a 2-3, and from there a 2-1-2, 3-2, or Triangle-and-Two.

"Yes sir," says Sonny Smith. "I sure do love zones."

Triangle-and-Two

The basic idea is a 1-2 zone with two defenders playing man-to-man. It's a time-honored stratagem applied to such as Tom Gola and Norm Grekin at LaSalle, on through to the "Ernie and Bernie Show" at Tennessee. North Carolina was likewise plagued by Triangle-and-Twos when the Tar Heels sported Sam Perkins and Michael Jordan. "It's actually the same principle as a sloughing man-to-man," Dean Smith observes. "Play two men strong and zone the weak side."

To overcome a Triangle-and-Two, the zonees require pile-driving picks, accurate passwork, and artful shooting. "Take the two guys being played man-to-man," says Mullaney, "and have them set picks for everybody else. With the man-to-man defenders playing so tight, it's like having two double-picks. Just pick, pass, and pop."

Box-and-One

"Usually we'll box-and-one a dangerous scorer," says Fordham's Penders. "Or else use it as a change-up, maybe to cool down

somebody who has a hot hand. If you kill the head, then the body dies, so we also like to box point guards."

Some coaches simply ignore the box-and-one and run their regular offenses. "Never give the guy up," warns Pitt's Chipman. "Most likely he's your best player."

Other coaches insist on making adjustments. "The player being manned has to move without the ball," says Penders. "He's got to bang his man into back-picks and double-picks. After a while there's bound to be some daylight, then it's a question of hitting your shots. There are lots of gaps in the middle of a box-and-one, so you also want to stampede the offensive boards."

Last year, Georgetown applied a hermetically sealed box-and-one against Chris Mullin and St. John's. The sharpshooting Mullin was consistently "topped," overplayed and denied the ball—a risky strategy for any other team but the Hoyas. Whenever Mullin tried to shake loose through the back door, his shots were slammed at by Patrick Ewing. Naturally, St. John's coach Lou Carnesecca ordered Mullin to run his man into a series of baseline picks. But Georgetown switched at every opportunity, thereby maintaining the top on Mullin while confronting him with perpetually fresh and eager faces.

"When you see a gimmick defense only once or twice a year," says Mullaney, "it can be a nightmare."

~ Diamond-and-One ~

Alter ego of the box-and-one, with more pressure on the point and less presence on the boards. Frequently, when the ball is gapped, boxes are transmuted into diamonds.

~ Matchup Zone ~

As the players get larger and better, as the game becomes more complicated, all distinctions blur. Year by year, zones are getting more mannish and man-to-man defenses more zonish. And the latest dreadnaught defense is called the matchup zone.

Matchups will play 1-2-2, 1-3-1, or 2-3 depending upon the coach's personal bias. Whatever the front, 98% of the time opponents will counter with a zone offense featuring slow-motion passes and cautious cuts. As soon as the offense assumes a definite shape, the defense insidiously shifts into a sloughing man-to-man.

"Georgetown and Villanova run great ones," says Boyd Grant, longtime coach at Fresno State, "but we think we run the best matchup there is. We threaten every passing lane and cover the boards. Ball pressure is our key, and we'll trap in the corners and at the wings. We *always* use man principles on the ball. That means whenever your man receives the ball you're in what we call the 'ready' position. If he dribbles, you're in the

'point' position. Should he pick up his dribble, you're prepared to 'stick.' Sometimes it's difficult to recognize exactly what we're doing. I can remember years back in the NIT when Wake Forest never figured out if we were playing man or zone."

To solve the matchup zone, teams are advised to stick with their man-to-man offenses. "Send those cutters through," says Penders. "Set your picks and force the defense to switch. Reverse the ball when you can, move it in and out. All things being equal, some type of free-lance offense kills a matchup zone."

Dean Smith reports that North Carolina's "T-Game"—an intricate sequence of cuts and picks—works wonders against

matchups. "If they switch," says Smith, "we simply look to make the lob pass. The key to beating any zone is patience."

Numerical zones and geometric zones. Chimerical zones and time zones.

The heart of defense lies somewhere beyond all the strategies and deeper than the X's and O's. "Zones, shmomes," Red Holzman used to say. "Sometime, somewhere, somebody's got to guard somebody." ■

Contributing writer CHARLEY ROSEN coaches a variation called the 'Twilight Zone,' which gives hope to big, slow white guys. His last I.S. piece was the NBA preview.

Can Male Pattern Baldness Be Effectively Treated?

In the United States the U.S. Governmental regulatory agencies believe that in the greater majority of cases, hair loss is the beginning or advanced stages of male pattern baldness, and there are no known treatments or cures for male pattern baldness.

The notion that nothing can be done about male pattern baldness is not universally held. Recently, the Canadian equivalent of the United States Food and Drug Administration recognized a hair restorer, containing a precise blend of amino acids, as both safe and effective. In Europe, a hair preparation developed at a major university, containing an embryonic tissue complex, has been used by over three million people and is reported to cause a regrowth of hair.

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The application involves applying the hair preparation to the scalp with the enclosed eye dropper, and washing the hair with a specially developed shampoo two hours later.

Do not be fooled by similar looking advertisements, claiming to offer a hair product which removes dihydrotestosterone (DHT) from the scalp. The most recent scientific studies have found that dihydrotestosterone is necessary for proper hair growth and does not cause male pattern baldness. This explains the poor results obtained with topically applied progesterone treatments, which block the formation of dihydrotestosterone in the scalp.

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NUMBERS

HOCKEY'S BEST

Gordie Howe is the all-time NHL scoring leader with 801 goals, 1,049 assists, and 1,850 points, but on a per-80-game basis the longtime Detroit right wing doesn't rank in the top 20 in any of the three categories. Based on a minimum of 300 games, here are the career NHL leaders in goals, assists, and points per 80 games.

GOALS

Rank	Player, Team	Games	Goals	Goals/ 80 Games
1.	Wayne Gretzky, Oilers	473	429	72.6
2.	Mike Bossy, Islanders	609	474	62.3
3.	Cy Denneny, Bruins	326	246	60.4
4.	Jari Kurri, Oilers	363	232	51.1
5.	Marcel Dionne, Kings	1,083	629	46.5
6.	Michel Goulet, Nordiques	457	264	46.2
7.	Bobby Hull, Black Hawks	1,063	610	45.9
8.	Glenn Anderson, Oilers	370	212	45.8
9.	Rick Martin, Kings	685	384	44.8
10.	Phil Esposito, Rangers	1,282	717	44.7
11.	Maurice Richard, Canadiens	978	544	44.5
12.	Rick Vaive, Maple Leafs	447	247	44.2
13.	Dale Hawerchuk, Jets	319	175	43.9
14.	Peter Stastny, Nordiques	387	210	43.4
15.	Guy Lafleur, Canadiens	961	518	43.1
15.	Kent Nilsson, North Stars	425	229	43.1

ASSISTS

Rank	Player, Team	Games	Asst.	Assts./ 80 Games
1.	Wayne Gretzky, Oilers	473	693	117.2
2.	Peter Stastny, Nordiques	387	381	78.8
3.	Bobby Orr, Bruins	657	645	78.5
4.	Denis Savard, Black Hawks	388	344	70.9
5.	Bryan Trottier, Islanders	756	639	67.6
6.	Paul Coffey, Oilers	394	320	65.0
7.	Marcel Dionne, Kings	1,083	876	64.7
8.	Dale Hawerchuk, Jets	319	251	62.9

ASSISTS, Continued

Rank	Player, Team	Games	Asst.	Assts./ 80 Games
9.	Kent Nilsson, North Stars	425	333	62.7
10.	Jari Kurri, Oilers	363	281	61.9
11.	Bernie Federko, Blues	638	487	61.1
12.	Guy Lafleur, Canadiens	961	728	60.6
13.	Dennis Potvin, Islanders	856	642	60.0
14.	Mike Bossy, Islanders	609	454	59.6
15.	Bobby Clarke, Flyers	1,144	852	59.6

POINTS

Rank	Player, Team	Games	Pts.	Pts./ 80 Games
1.	Wayne Gretzky, Oilers	473	1,122	189.8
2.	Peter Stastny, Nordiques	387	591	122.1
3.	Mike Bossy, Islanders	609	928	121.9
4.	Jari Kurri, Oilers	363	513	113.0
5.	Bobby Orr, Bruins	657	915	111.4
6.	Marcel Dionne, Kings	1,083	1,505	111.2
7.	Bryan Trottier, Islanders	756	1,019	107.8
8.	Dale Hawerchuk, Jets	319	426	106.8
9.	Denis Savard, Black Hawks	388	514	106.0
10.	Kent Nilsson, North Stars	425	562	105.8
11.	Guy Lafleur, Canadiens	961	1,246	103.7
12.	Phil Esposito, Rangers	1,282	1,590	99.2
13.	Dave Taylor, Kings	541	661	97.7
14.	Glenn Anderson, Oilers	370	442	95.6
15.	Bernie Federko, Blues	638	743	93.2

By Dave Brown

ROUGH STUFF

The Lady Byng Trophy is traditionally awarded to the NHL's most gentlemanly player, a player who is big on points but small on penalties. Here are the best and worst point vs. penalty players during the 1984-85 season.

BIG POINT, NO PENALTY

Name, Team	Points	Penalty Minutes	Points/PM
1. Joe Mullen, Blues	92	6	15.33
2. Rick Middleton, Bruins	76	6	12.67
3. Kent Nilsson, Flames	99	14	7.07
4. Steve Larmer, Black Hawks	86	14	6.14
5. Mats Naslund, Canadiens	79	14	5.64
6. Jari Kurri, Oilers	135	30	4.50
7. Wayne Gretzky, Oilers	208	52	4.00
8. Bernie Federko, Blues	103	27	3.81
9. John Ogronick, Red Wings	105	30	3.50
10. Mike Bossy, Islanders	117	38	3.08

BIG PENALTY, NO POINT

Name, Team	Points	Penalty Minutes	Points/PM
1. Bob McGill, Maple Leafs	5	250	0.020
2. Jim Kyte, Jets	3	111	0.027
3. Dwight Schofield, Blues	5	184	0.027
4. Harold Sneyts, North Stars	7	232	0.030
5. Rod Buskas, Penguins	9	191	0.047
6. Colin Campbell, Red Wings	6	124	0.048
7. Jeff Brubaker, Maple Leafs	12	209	0.057
8. Jay Wells, Kings	11	185	0.059
9. John Blum, Bruins	16	263	0.068
10. Tim Hunter, Flames	22	259	0.085

By Michael Geist

PRECISION SHOOTING

While every hockey fan realizes that Wayne Gretzky is the greatest scoring machine in the game, few realize that Pittsburgh rookie Warren Young was the league's best sharpshooter, scoring on better than 30% of his shots. Here is a look at last year's best and worst precision shooters (minimum of 20 goals).

BEST

Name	Team	Goals	Shots	Pct
1. Warren Young	Penguins	40	130	30.8
2. Jari Kurri	Oilers	71	261	27.2
3. Charlie Simmer	Bruins	34	134	25.4
4. Dave Taylor	Kings	41	172	23.8
5. Mats Naslund	Canadiens	42	179	23.5
6. Mike Krushelnyski	Oilers	43	187	23.0
7. Steve Larmer	Black Hawks	46	206	22.3
8. Darryl Sutter	Black Hawks	20	90	22.2
9. Paul MacLean	Jets	41	186	22.0
10. Ilkka Sinisalo	Flyers	36	166	21.7

WORST

Name	Team	Goals	Shots	Pct
1. Ray Bourque	Bruins	20	332	6.0
2. Reijo Ruotsalainen	Rangers	28	255	11.0
3. Scott Stevens	Capitals	21	184	11.4
4. Keith Acton	North Stars	20	167	12.0
5. Brian Bellows	North Stars	26	211	12.3
6. Ron Francis	Whalers	24	193	12.4
7. Thomas Steen	Jets	30	238	12.6
8. Jorgen Pettersson	Blues	23	180	12.8
9. Steve Payne	North Stars	29	224	12.9
10. Aaron Broten	Devils	22	170	12.9

By Michael Geist

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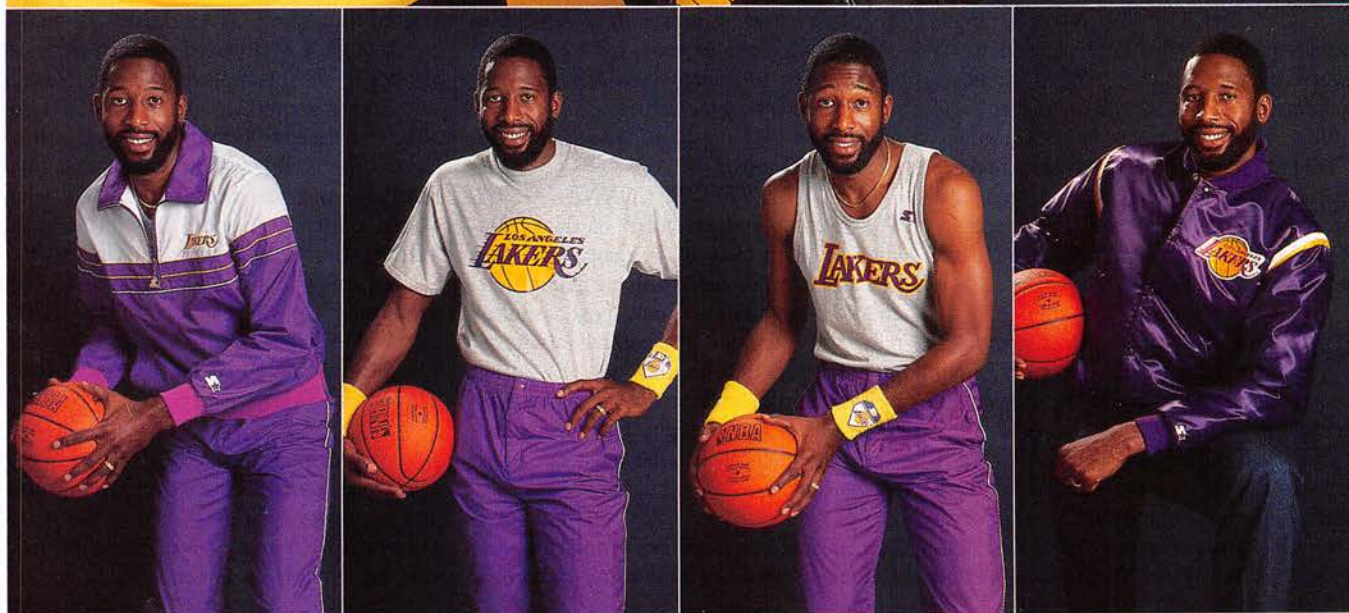
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THE GOOD DOCTOR

After reuniting Joe Niekro with his older brother Phil, is it true that Yankees owner George Steinbrenner had to finance the college educations of both pitchers' children? I think that's a pretty unusual contract demand. Don't you?

I.R.A., LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

No. A lot of baseball owners have been asked to make contributions to the United Niekro College Fund.

Michael and Leon Spinks aren't really going to fight each other for the heavyweight championship of the world, are they?

K.O., EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Sibling rivalry will not be carried that far. However, Michael and Leon, billing themselves as The Righteous Brothers, will be wrestling Hulk Hogan and Andre the Giant in a tag-team title match February 30 in St. Louis.

Which one of the U.S. Open tennis champions, Ivan Lendl or Hana Mandlikova, is more popular with the tennis fans of Czechoslovakia?

P.S., LUTHERVILLE, MARYLAND

The Czechs are for the male.

Pete Rose did a great job breaking Ty Cobb's hit record. What does Pete have planned as an encore?

M.S., CINCINNATI, OHIO

During the offseason, Pete planned to do several things: 1. Sell "Ty Who?" bumper stickers. 2. Send his bat, glove, uniform, and bottle of Grecian Formula to Cooperstown. 3. Tell Pete Jr. to visit Ty Cobb's son, find out what his favorite album is, and break his record. 4. Accept Marge Schott's contract offer of 4,192 St. Bernard puppies. 5. Break the legs of Wade Boggs.

Fill me in: What is so special about Air Jordan sneakers? I know Michael Jordan is a great basketball player, but what makes his shoes different from anybody else's?

J.V., RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

I can see right away why you wouldn't think Jordan's shoes were helpful. As a practical joke, a local manufacturer distributed hundreds of pairs of phony Air Jordans to shoe

stores near the campus of North Carolina State University. Players can hardly move in them, because there is tar all over the heels.

Quick, name 10 baseball players whose names didn't come up in the Pittsburgh cocaine trial.

P.C.P., BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

The ironic twist to that court case is that the number of spectators in the courtroom during the trial was three times greater than the number of spectators who attended games in Pittsburgh last season.

Does the newspaper USA Today cover sports and news any differently from the rest of the nation's press?

R.O., ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

I would merely say that the newspaper's reporting is distinctive. Headlines in 1985 reported that Lendl and Mandlikova won the USA Open. That the Baltimore Stars won the championship of the USAFL. That school children should recite: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the USA." And that the 18th president of the United States was USA Grant.

Baseballs are horsehide. Footballs are pigskin. What are basketballs made of?

B.K., BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

The shaved heads of unsuccessful coaches.

Vanderbilt is a university I have been reading about for years, but I have never met anybody who went to school there, anybody who knows where the school is, or anybody who knows anything about the school at all. Does it really exist?

U.C., HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

The founder and president of this distinguished institution of learning was Amy Vanderbilt, who, along with her good friend and athletic director, Emily Post, required only one thing of prospective students: proper etiquette. To this day, Vanderbilt jocks drink Gatorade with their pinkies extended, and hold campus contests to see which student can eat the most open-face sandwiches.

Now that Jack Buck and Hank Stram no longer can do the broadcasts, what would

happen if Howard Cosell were hired to do "Monday Night Football" games on the radio?

B.M., HELENA, MONTANA

For the first time in memory, football fans would start tuning in to radio broadcasts and leave the sound off.

Sacramento has professional sports now. What can you tell us Easterners about the new home of the NBA Kings?

I.T., CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The capital of California is a cool town. No tofu eaters and white wine drinkers here. Just a bunch of hip cats who dig shootin' hoops. You'll be able to see many of the state's leading legislators at courtside this season, including former Gov. Jerry (Downtown) Brown.

The big mystery around our neighborhood bar was whether anybody in the room—or anybody west of Connecticut, for that matter—could name five Hartford Whalers. All of us guys are big hockey fans, and we even know who Vancouver's goalie is, but not one of us can name a soul who plays for Hartford. Please help.

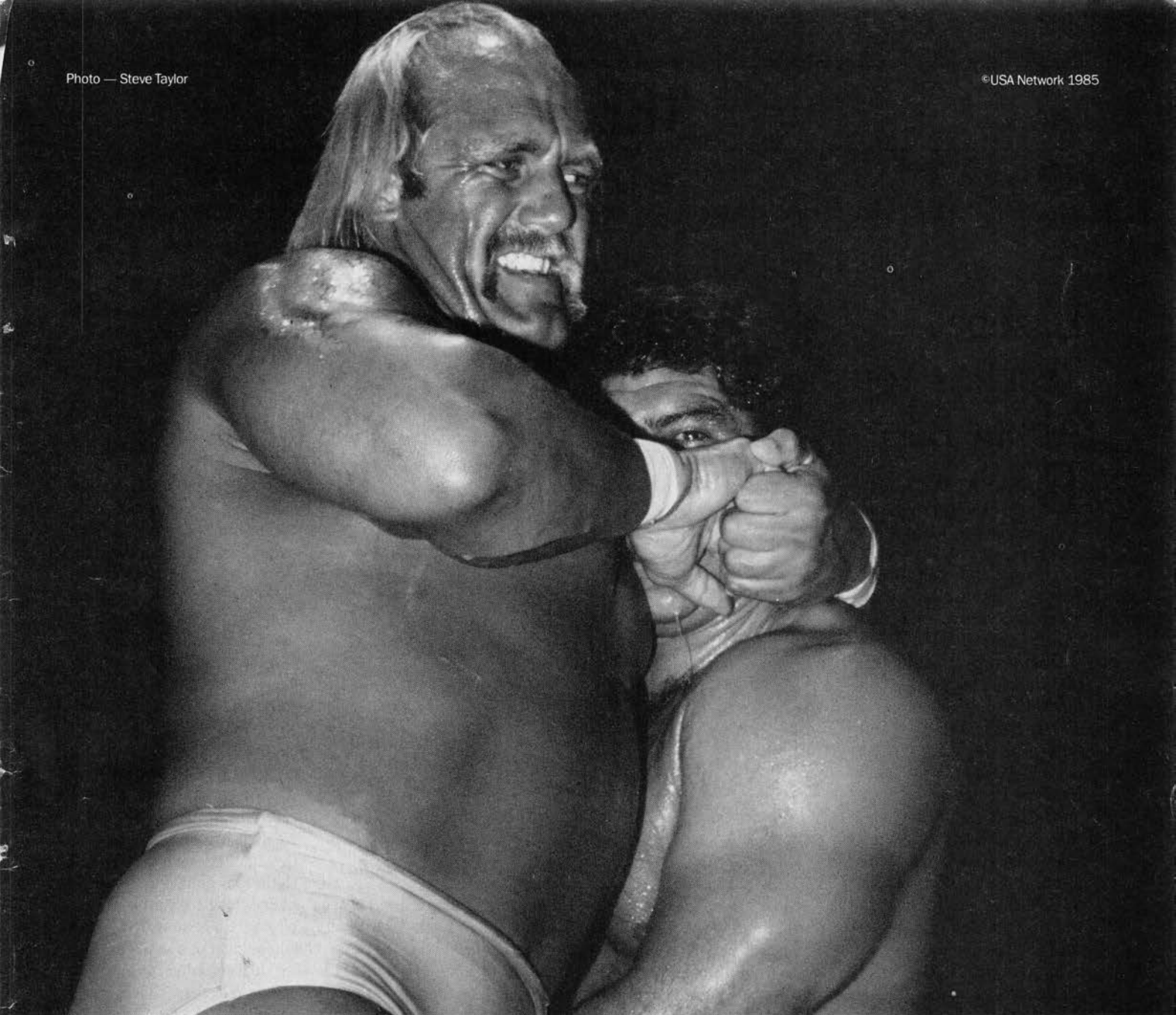
J. C., FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN

We called hockey expert Stan Fischler for assistance, and he told us he could name five guys at Hartford Insurance, but not five Whalers. We called columnist Leigh Montville of *The Boston Globe*, but he started naming off Oliver Barrett IV and a bunch of guys who played for Harvard, not Hartford. We finally asked Gordie Howe, who knows something about the Hartford NHL franchise, to give us the name of five players. He said he didn't really know any, but there was one brown-haired guy who skated pretty well and a big fellow with freckles who threw a check once in a while. So, anyone with any information as to the identities or whereabouts of the NHL Hartford Whalers, please contact this column or your local FBI office immediately. Thank you.

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, Illinois, 60201—then wait patiently.

Photo — Steve Taylor

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THE FAN

By LARRY KING

Baseball Teaches You About Life

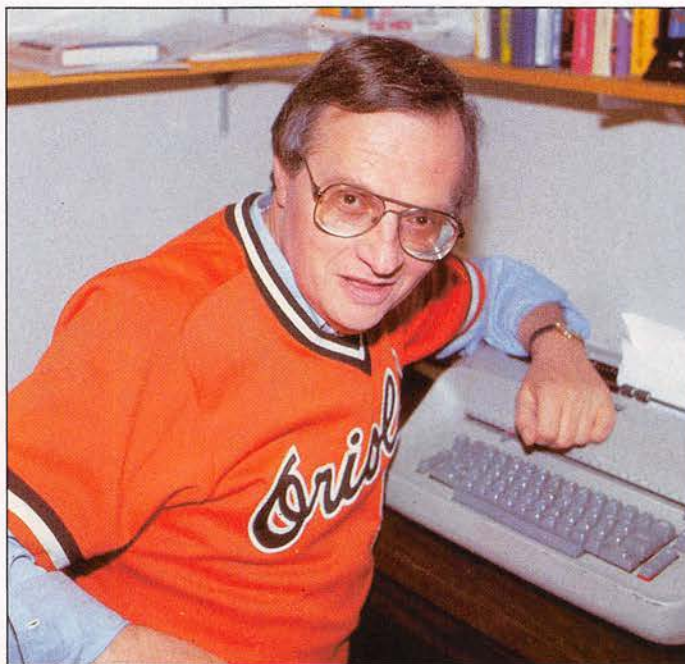
BASEBALL IS MY love. The game was always around me when I was growing up in Brooklyn, and it was my god back then. Whew! Baseball was just part of my everyday existence, tied to the fabric of my life.

Don't get me wrong, I liked the Knicks, the Rangers, the football Giants, all types of sports. But nothing compared to baseball. My earliest memory is Red Barber's voice, as he broadcast Dodger games. I was born in 1933, and by the time I was six he was thrilling me. The Dodgers were part of me, and the third baseman, old No. 3, Billy Cox, was my favorite ballplayer. I tried to imitate him and the other players, to walk and talk like them.

Why is baseball so special to me? Because it's the only game that whenever I go I see something I haven't seen before, I learn something I didn't know before. The game is an ongoing source of enlightenment. Earl Weaver says the same thing about the game, and he's a manager. It's just that baseball has all the elements of life—you learn about life, and you discover things about yourself from a baseball game.

The sport revitalizes me. There's that springtime and the return of life that is like the budding of flowers. There's the transformation of young players coming in and old players going out. There are also things that remain constant. The team is always there, the truths in the game, the pure artistry that one can cling to.

That's why I'd chuck every success I've had to be a ballplayer. It's a dream life. So if I had a wish, I'd be a major-leaguer, and I don't care what the uniform would be—even if I am an Orioles fan. I just want to play on real grass and dirt; those domed refrigerators



'I'd chuck every success I've had to be a major league ballplayer. It's a dream life. And I don't care what the uniform would be—even if I'm now an Orioles fan.'

aren't real baseball. Neither is artificial turf.

I became an Orioles fan when I left Brooklyn in 1957 and broke into radio/TV in the Miami area. The Orioles did their spring training there. I wanted to watch as much baseball as possible in the spring because Miami didn't have a big-league team, so that's how I met the Brooks Robinsons and Jim Palmers. I'd follow the Orioles' exploits all summer.

But since the Dodgers moved out of Brooklyn, I've never been a fan like I was in my youth. I'm not a *fan-atic*. Except for the World Series or the playoffs, I'd rather see the Orioles lose 5 to 4 than win 12 to 1. I want to see baseball played well. The drama of the game as it unfolds, those slight movements by a pitcher, or an outfielder shading a batter a certain way—that's what I want to see. There's magic in that. I love the fact that baseball is the only team game without a clock. There's not a thing about the game that I don't like.

Baseball lingers. The great moments stay with you. I was at Jackie Robinson's first game. I remember him coming out of the dugout, black as coal, and the stands were

filled. It was electric. Then there was Billy Cox at third. . . . I remember Casey Stengel yelling to Brooks Robinson, 'You are the second-best third baseman who ever played.' Brooks asked who's better, and Casey said, 'No. 3, Brooklyn.' I also remember Furillo playing balls off the right-field wall, Campy throwing balls to second without standing up, and Pee Wee Reese's night at Ebbets Field, where everyone stood up and lit a match once the lights were turned out.

And, luckily, I've had so many wonderful players on my show. Mickey Mantle was on a short time ago. It was incredible talking to him. I've spent a lot of time with Musial, who was my boyhood hero. He was called 'The Man' in Brooklyn. He'd hit homers there to beat the Dodgers, and be cheered all the way around the bases.

I wasn't a very good ballplayer—I fantasize about playing. Sometimes I can't get to sleep. I lie there and I'm a third baseman for the Cleveland Indians. I don't go hog wild, I'm not thinking Yankees. Cleveland. I charge a bunt and throw the guy out.

The next best thing is to be a baseball announcer. I still want to take a year out from my radio and TV shows to do baseball broadcasting.

I also admire guys like Lasorda and Herzog, whom I recently had a three-hour lunch with. We discussed everyone in the game. It was a high for me. I asked a lot of questions, and they agreed that Dwight Gooden will be the best pitcher ever to play the game. Koufax told me the same thing.

Oh, I'm a fan all right. If *Time* magazine did a big story on me, and I looked in the index and saw it listed—yet at the same time saw a story on Earl or some Oriole, I'd turn to that story first. No doubt about it! ■

LARRY KING stays in the lineup on more than 200 radio stations with his late-night talk show for Mutual, and on his cable-TV talk show. He also appears on NBC's 'NFL '85.'




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